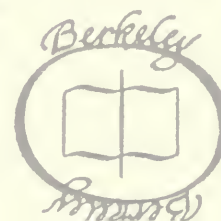
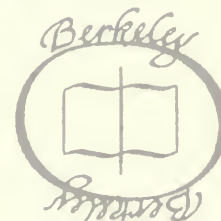
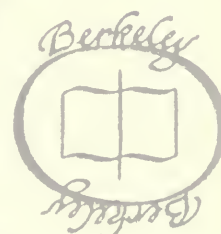
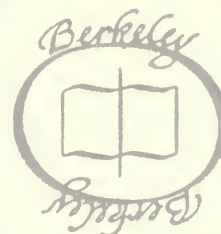
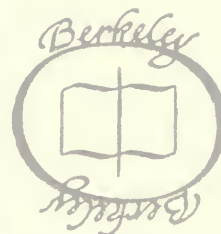
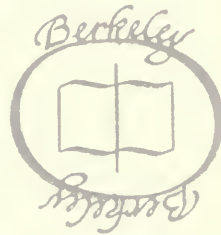
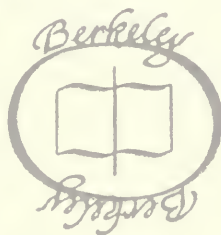
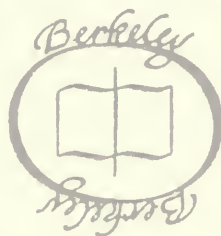
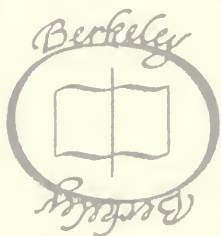


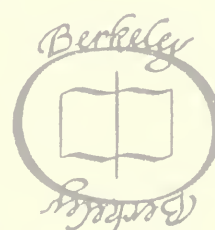
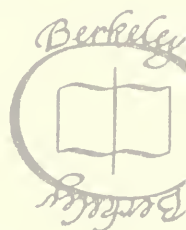
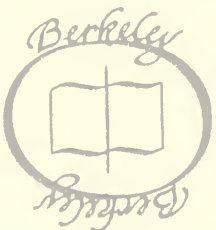
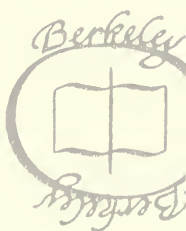
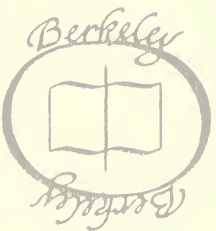
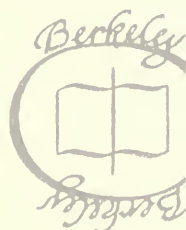
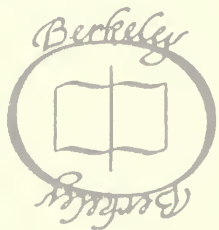
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# ESSAYS.



*Prof. J. Stringham.  
Jan. 1895.  
Feb. 95.*

# ESSAYS

IN

## Ancient & Modern Literature.

BY

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CAPE TOWN:

PRINTED AT THE "CAPE TIMES" PRINTING WORKS, 56, ST. GEORGE'S STREET.

1893.

ESSAYS

General & Special Literature

JOHN JAMES AUDEN & CHRISTOPHER AUDEN

Printed in Great Britain by the University Press, Cambridge  
and in the United States by the University Press, New York  
and in Canada by the University Press, Toronto

BRITISH CATALOGUE

GIFT



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ON THE ORESTEIA OF ÆSCHYLUS.





# ON THE ORESTEIA OF ÆSCHYLUS.

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AMONGST Greek writers none has reached such a high point of excellence as Æschylus. The beauty of his works has, one may say, only been appreciated in modern times, or, I might say, it has been reserved to us, having the whole collection of classical works before us, to pronounce his creations the most remarkable of ancient dramatic art.

It was customary to combine three tragedies with what one might call a comedy, and to apply to the whole the name of "Tetralogia." The reasons assigned for the retention of the comedy in connection with the tragedies have been various, but a discussion on this topic is beyond the purport of the paper.

I desire to review with you the most marvellous production of the most remarkable school of writers that the classic world has produced :

## THE ORESTEIA.

This name is given to a tetralogia, because the Orestes mythos is the foundation of the whole composition. This mythos is taken from that of the cycle of the Pelopidæ. Even in Homer, in the *Odyssey*, the elements of an Oresteia, as an epic poem, are to be found.

The mythos formed part of the epic of the return of the victorious Atridæ. The following is a rough outline of the mythology of Pelops. Pelops, son of the mythological king Tantalus, came from Asia Minor to Europe, acquired influence and power in the peninsula now bearing his name and obtained by force the kingdom of Oenomaos. This king imposed the following task on all who sought the hand of his daughter : to conquer him in a chariot race, he relying on the swiftness of his horses, or on the agility of his charioteer, Myrtilus. Many had already attempted and failed till Pelops came and conquered, either, it is said, through the influence of Poseidon, or through the corruption of Myrtilus. At all events on the return from the race, Myrtilus cast himself into the sea, and all the troubles of the Pelopidæ are said to have come from curses which this charioteer heaped upon his antagonist.

Pelops had two sons who were persuaded by their mother to murder their step-brother ; whereupon they fled to the king of Mycenæ who gave them the kingdom of Medea.

When Eurystheus marched against the Heraclidæ he left the kingdom to Atreus, and thus it passed to the Pelopidæ.

Atreus had two sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus. Agamemnon, "the father of men," as Homer calls him, had a wife Klytemnæstra, three daughters, of whom the most celebrated was the unfortunate Iphigeneia, and Orestes, a son. Before leaving for Troy, he installed Ægisthos, as his representative, but the wretch makes Klytemnæstra unfaithful to her husband and afterwards induces her to assist him in murdering the husband on his return from the war.

He commits this atrocious deed, notwithstanding the prickings of his conscience and the warning voice of Zeus who causes him to be aware of the future revenge of Orestes. The latter, who has fled from his home when quite a boy, returns when about twenty years of age to revenge the death of his father and finds the murderer, feasting and celebrating the anniversary of the murder of the author of his days. He kills him and marries his cousin, the daughter of Menelaus and Helen.

The mythological and dramatic enlargements and extensions of the mythos are particularly noticeable in the fate of Thyestes and the children of Agamemnon.

The part played by Ægisthos is already indicated in the epos, in that Atreus lived at enmity with his brother. He is said to have induced the wife of his brother to steal a golden lamb out of the flocks of Atreus. He drove his brother and children into exile, but in order to punish him more, he deceived him by promises, caused him to return and then gave him the flesh of his own children to eat at table.

As Thyestes succeeded Atreus it is highly probable that he murdered him.

Thoughtlessly Thyestes allows Agamemnon and Menelaus to attain manhood.

When the former had seized the reins of government, he banished Thyestes and his progeny. The fate of Agamemnon's children was then glorified.

The history of Iphigeneia is so well known that I need only define it in outline. Assembled with the army at Aulis, previous to the departure for Troy, Agamemnon offends Artemis by boasting of being able to surpass her in the chase. Thereupon she sends adverse winds, retarding the departure of the Greeks. Kalchas, the seer, informs Agamemnon that the wrath of the goddess will only be appeased by the sacrifice of his daughter. She is brought into camp, under pretence of being wedded to Achilles, and when lying on the altar and about to be sacrificed, she is carried away to Taurus by the goddess who substitutes a stag in her place. The discovery of her existence and safety is made by Orestes who is sent to Taurus to consult an oracle.

During the absence of his father, the son had been staying with Strophion, whose child, Pylades, is Orestes' most faithful friend and who afterwards marries his sister Electra.

Orestes, being guilty of matricide, is incessantly pursued by the Erinyes. He flees from country to country and is, at last, absolved in Troas, in the temple of Artemis. Finally he returns to Athens, submits to be tried by the Areopagus, where, according to popular belief, he was judged by the twelve supreme gods and acquitted at the intercession of Pallas.

From the above cycle of mythos the Oresteia was produced, a work in which Æschylus gives his opinion, in broad characters, of the working of divine justice—whilst showing how a chain of evil can pass from hand to hand and seemingly become an inheritance; because men who should be the tools of divine vengeance forego their duty in the exercise of blind passions and by doing so draw down upon themselves fresh punishment, till at last, all demands of justice are satisfied.

It becomes, therefore, evident that the author did not acknowledge the existence of an inexorable fate, one worked out in opposition to all moral truth. On the contrary, the freedom of mind and moral action remains untouched.

Each character draws upon himself, or herself, his or her own fate, in overstepping the boundaries of right that have been prescribed to him or her.

As mentioned in the introduction, this cycle of the Oresteia consists of four works.

The first tragedy deals with the murder of Agamemnon by his wife Klytemnæstra. Agamemnon appears as an awe-inspiring monarch, who, however, sorrows over the



wounds of his house, having drawn down upon himself a hard fate by his own warlike ambition, in that the war before Troy required not only the sacrifice of so many lives, but also that of his own daughter.

Klytemnæstra appears in all the glory of her position, her character approaching the masculine. Forgetful, however, of her love as a wife and mother she had destroyed love at its very fountain and concluded a criminal union with Ægisthos in the absence of her husband. The latter was planning revenge on account of the misdeeds of Atreus towards his father, Thyestes. With thorough consciousness Klytemnæstra murders her husband on his return from Troy and also the captured princess Cassandra and recounts her deeds to the Elder of the Areopagus (represented by the choir), with revolting coldness.

As a compensation, or justification of her murder, she brings forward the death of Iphigeneia, the intrigues of Agamemnon before Troy and the revengeful spirit of the house of the "father of men." The calmness with which this work inspires the reader or spectator lies in the thought that Agamemnon has not fallen without an avenging Nemesis.

The second tragedy represents the revenge of Orestes. This topic has also been treated by Sophocles and Euripides in their "*Electra*."

If it were possible to draw a comparison between these three works, each a masterpiece, it would be difficult to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion whose is the best.

Justice, in heroic times, demanded that the nearest relation should avenge the death of the murdered one. Duty forces Orestes to carry out, in its entirety, the oracle of the Delphian god. Klytemnæstra's deed should have carried flight and subsequent cleansing in its train. She fails in both. She defies divine ordinances and remains in the place where her crimes are committed, trusting in the aid of Ægisthos.

Orestes returns to his native land accompanied by Pylades at the moment when Electra is adorning the grave of her father with flowers. Orestes first kills Ægisthos and then his mother.

His act is a just one. No judge can condemn him, but the justice of the deed does not remove the stain of sinfulness which is fixed upon him. The hatred of his mother pursues him, personified by the awful Erinyes, the goddesses of Revenge.

Apollo was he to whom revenge was sacred, in his capacity as a god of punishment. As the god of light, on the other hand, he was at the same time the one who cleansed the murderer of his crimes. Pursued by the Erinyes, Orestes flees to the temple of Apollo for protection and cleansing.

In the conflict between the deities, the reconciliation is brought about in the third tragedy, called the "*Eumenidæ*," by means of a new institution.

Orestes is in the temple of Apollo. Here, in this holy place, he finds peace. His pursuers fall asleep. But the cleansing afforded by Apollo has no influence with the Titanic powers. The Delphian god refers his protégée to Athenæ, whose wisdom is to decide his case.

She constitute a court under her own presidency in which a verdict is arrived at concerning Orestes. Apollo appears as advocate for the murderer. Orestes is pardoned by a legal act of mercy, whilst the harsh natural law of right is held in bounds by political, social and reasonably-distinguishing justice, similar to that which the tribunal on the Hill of Ares has to exercise.

There, then, the two powers stand out in sharp contrast. On the one hand Absolute Necessity, on the other Free Moral Will. There, the Erinyes, the

posthumous birth of the Titans, here the Olympians : Zeus. Here, Athenæ whom the softened Hellenic spirit had placed in closer, nearer and more friendly contact with men. Athenæ, personified wisdom, mollifies her opponents and obtains from them a concession more in accordance with the ideas of the younger generation of the gods.

The Erinyes thus become the Eumenidæ, that is, protecting goddesses of good, as also the goddesses of revenge for evil deeds.

Thus Æschylus, who loves to cover every grand side of the glory of his fatherland under a mythical cloak, causes two wholesome institutions to appear out of the inventions of two ancient myths, viz. : the Areopagus, the legal judge of the crime of murder and with it the closely connected worship of the Eumenidæ ; causing them to appear for the lasting benefit of Athens.

When Æschylus composed his *Oresteia*, Pericles was just busy destroying the remaining vestiges of power of the assembly on the Hill of Ares.

Æschylus, the representative of the Marathonian period, was one of those Athenians who detested the insatiable desire for power by the rule of the plebs and who desired to maintain the old customs and institutions of the Athenians. He hoped to convert his brother-citizens to better things, by impressing upon them the idea, that nothing was more wanting to mankind than the acknowledgment of a higher power, elevated beyond the sphere of controversy, in which the institution of the worship of the Erinyes (which stood in close connection with the customs of the Areopagus) aided him admirably.

The crown which his choir carried away as the prize of his composition had, however, not the desired result, so far as his political expectations were concerned.

Side by side with this motive, there appear, in the last part, political insinuations on the just closed past, or present, each more or less pointed, in which the glory of Athens is desired to be brought out.

Shortly before the representation of the *Oresteia*, the Athenians had concluded a treaty with the allies of Argos. This event, Æschylus cleverly embodied in his mythos, in causing the fidelity of the allies with Athens to be sealed by Orestes and makes it more solemn by bringing it into connection with political antiquity. The promises which he places in the mouth of Orestes were, in one sense, fulfilled in the concluded treaty, in so far that Argos had never taken up a hostile position towards Athens.

Moreover, the Athenians were in conflict with the Lesbians concerning the possession of the coast of Troas, particularly of Sigeion. No doubt at the time when Æschylus composed the *Oresteia* the question was being renewed. He takes this opportunity of confirming the Athenians in their demands, by making a statement that Athenæ came to those coasts shortly after the Trojan War to take possession of the country.

Finally, one must take cognizance of the reflexion on the glorious Persian wars in which Æschylus himself took part.

This tetralogia was first represented in the year 451 B.C. The author closed his career with this composition. At least, it is known that three years after its representation he died, close upon 70 years of age in Sicily, whither he had gone for a second time in his life.

Many conflicting reasons are assigned for this step, amongst others an accusation of treason and the very production of the tragedy itself.



RACINE'S PHÈDRE

AND

Its Relation to the Hippolytus of Euripides.

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## RACINE'S PHÈDRE

AND

### Its Relation to the Hippolytus of Euripides.

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THE Hippolytus of Euripides is the original which Racine has followed in Phèdre and from which he has taken, not passages only, but whole scenes. It must, undoubtedly, be of interest to those less intimately acquainted with the literature of antiquity, to see what use the French poet has made of the antique drama, and to study the relation existing between it and his Phèdre.

Theseus was the son of Cœthra and Neptune, and king of the Athenians; and having married Hippolyta, one of the Amazons, he begat Hippolytus, who excelled in beauty and chastity. When his wife died, he married for his second wife, Phædra, a Cretan, daughter of Minos, king of Crete and Pasiphaë. Theseus, in consequence of having slain Pallas, one of his kinsmen, goes into banishment with his wife at Troezen, where it happened that Hippolytus was being brought up by Pittheus; but Phædra having seen the youth, was desperately enamoured, not that she was incontinent, but in order to fulfil the anger of Venus, who, having determined to destroy Hippolytus on account of his chastity, brought her plans to a conclusion. She, concealing her disease, at length was compelled to declare it to her nurse, who had promised to relieve her, and who, though against her inclination, had carried her words to the youth. Phædra, having learnt that he was exasperated, chided the nurse and hung herself. At which time Theseus, having arrived, and wishing to take down her that was strangled, found a letter attached to her, throughout which she accused Hippolytus with a design upon her virtue. And he, believing what was written, ordered Hippolytus to go into banishment, and put up a prayer to Neptune, in compliance with which the god destroyed Hippolytus. But Diana declared to Theseus everything that had happened, and blamed not Phædre but comforted him, bereaved of his child and wife, and promised to institute honours in the place to Hippolytus.

Such is the argument of the Greek tragedy.

Racine, in his preface, writes as follows: "Here is another tragedy, the subject of which is taken from Euripides. I have not failed to enrich my work with all that appeared to me most striking in this author. I have, however, followed a somewhat different method for the course of my action. Were I only indebted to him for the idea of the character of Phèdre, I can say that I owe him perhaps my best dramatic creation. I am not surprised that this *rôle* had such a success in the time of Euripides and that it has been so well received in our era, since it embraces all the qualities of a heroine in tragedy—as Aristotle demands them—those capable of stimulating compassion and arousing fear. In truth, Phèdre is neither quite guilty nor quite innocent. She has become involved, by fate and by



the anger of the gods, in an illegitimate passion of which she is the first to be horrified. All her efforts strive to surmount it. She had rather die than declare it to anyone, and when she is, at length, forced to reveal her terrible secret, she speaks of it in such a manner as to let it be clearly seen that her crime is more a punishment of the gods, than an exercise of her own will.

"I have even taken care to make her less odious than she is in the tragedies of the ancients where she herself resolves to accuse Hippolyte. I was of opinion that there was something too low and too vile in calumny to make it an instrument in the mouth of a princess, who has, elsewhere, such noble and virtuous sentiments. This villany seemed to me more appropriate in a nurse whose inclinations might be more servile, yet who, nevertheless, only formulates this false accusation in order to save her mistress.

"Phèdre consents, only, because her mental agitation is such as to make her quite beside herself, and she appears, a moment afterwards, intending to justify the innocent and to proclaim the truth.

"Hippolyte is accused in Euripides and in Seneca of having, in effect, violated his stepmother "*vim corpus tulit*" but here he is only accused of having had the design. I wished to spare Theseus a scene which might have made him less agreeable to an audience.

"As for the character of Hippolyte, I found, amongst the classics, that Euripides is reproached with having represented him as a philosopher exempt from all imperfections. Thus the death of this prince caused more indignation than pity. I considered it necessary to give him some weakness, which should make him, in a slight degree, guilty towards his father, without, however, depriving him of anything of that greatness which induces him to spare the honour of Phèdre, whilst allowing himself to be oppressed without accusing her. I call weakness the passion he feels for Aricie, the daughter and sister of the mortal enemies of his father.

"This Aricie is not an invention of my own. Virgil says, that Hippolyte married and had a son by her after Æsculapius had resuscitated him, and I have also read in some authors that Hippolyte married and brought with him to Italy a young Athenian of high birth who was called Aricie, and who gave her name to a small town in Italy.

"I mention these authorities because I have made a point of scrupulously following mythology. I have even followed the history of Theseus as found in Plutarch. It is in this historian, that I have found the passage which led to the belief that Theseus's descent into Hades, to carry off Proserpine, was a journey which he undertook in Epirus, near the source of the Acheron, to a king whose wife Pirithoüs wished to carry off and who kept Theseus a prisoner, after killing Pirithoüs. Thus I have tried to preserve the verisimilitude of history, without losing anything of the ornaments of the legend, which add extremely to poesy. And the rumour of the death of Theseus, founded on this fabulous journey, gives Phèdre an opportunity to declare her love, and becomes one of the principal causes of her misfortune; a declaration she would never have dared to make as long as she believed her husband alive.

"I can hardly affirm this work to be my best tragedy. To time and to the public I leave it to decide on its real merit. What I can state, however, is that I have never written one, in which virtue is more resplendent. The smallest faults are severely punished. The very thought of crime is here regarded with as much horror as the crime itself. The passions are only delineated to show all the disorders of which they are the cause. Vice is depicted everywhere with colours, which let



us know and abhor its deformity. This is the goal that everyone who works for the public should aim at. It is this, above all, that our first tragic poets have in view. Their theatres were schools, where virtue was not less inculcated than in the philosophical ones. Thus, Aristotle has laid down rules for dramatic works, and Socrates, the wisest of philosophers, did not disdain to collaborate with Euripides."

Let us see how far Racine has carried out his programme and with what success. Amongst the noteworthy poetical creations of modern times, used for dramatical representation, we cannot find a second tragical work which, considered as a remodelling of a classic drama, might be used as a comparison with Racine's work, for the purpose of establishing a point of view as to the rules to be observed by a poet in his modernizing effort, and as to what extent his freedom of action should go, without leading him on to foreign ground. As a criterion we shall, therefore, only be able to accept the treatment of those works which have antique materials as their subjects. Wherever we find these, in the hands of a Shakespeare or a Goethe, the dignity of their origin is at once made manifest to us. With them Greece and Rome are really the stage on which the forms, recalled to life, move once more. The classic spirit greets us in the majesty of each speech. That which is modern extends, solely, to the form of the ideas and of the action. It leaves the ideas themselves untouched, or, at least, substitutes modern ideas of equal majesty, which may worthily be placed, side by side, with the antique.

Demanding these qualities, as absolutely essential, in the *Phèdre* of Racine, we shall soon be forced to confess that he has not only mistaken the classical work but also the antique materials. The majesty of the characters, the nobility of thoughts, the breadth of morality, the strongly defined motives of each action, of each speech of the persons represented which raise the Greek drama to the zenith of a work of Art, have, with Racine, almost everywhere, given place to the very opposite. Yea, he is so much a Frenchman, that many of his characters are incapable of raising themselves above the level of frivolous French life, and it seems almost a freak, when he gives them classical names and makes Greece the scene of their acts.

The proof of this assertion will not be difficult, if we are patient enough to draw a comparison between the two works, as to the manner in which the myth has been treated by each author, as to the principal characters and the motives of their actions.

In Racine we find the source of the culpable love of *Phèdre* for her stepson in the brideless passion of a degenerated woman.

De l'amour j'ai toutes les fureurs.

The conclusion is indisputable, seeing that *Phèdre* greedily avails herself of every opportunity, even of the torments of pain during her repentance, to reveal in the sensual pictures of this incestuous love. Moral majesty is, therefore, *ab initio*, cut off from this character and where, in pompous declamation, an attempt is made to rise to such a height we soon recognise the sham, the untrue, and the hypocritical in the contradictions which immediately follow. A character so constituted was, to the Greeks, an absolute impossibility for artistic treatment, since art and morals stood, with them, in closest union. Euripides' *Phædra* remains, therefore, even in the midst of her wicked deeds, a moral character. The love of which she is possessed is not the result of inward degeneration, but of a force of nature conquering her in spite of herself, a power which the purest is unable to withstand, and which, therefore, appeared to the Greeks as the deed, as the anger of a deity. The

original nobility of the queen is not touched by this, for nowhere do we see her revelling in this love, the softest whisper of which she thrusts away with deep aversion. She trembles, but not in passionate excitement, and her determination to die, when once convinced of her incompetency to overcome her weakness, is immutable.

Her moral indignation, when she shews it, bears everywhere the imprint of truth and of harmony with her inmost self. Depicted in such a manner the character could easily become the subject of tragical treatment. It represents already, in itself alone, the tragic idea of the strife of human frailty with moral force.

Phædra is desirous of keeping her love secret. In the classic tragedy this decision is an immediate result of the character, but, in Racine it is more arbitrary, capricious, since it is but little in accordance with the later actions and the voluptuous representations which Phèdre, when she had disclosed herself, makes to the nurse as well as to Hippolyte, concerning the warmth of her passion. The nurse worms the secret out of her mistress, and overcome by the terror of it, prays—in Euripides—for her own death. It is only when fully cognizant of the cold determination of Phædra to kill herself that the nurse regains her self-possession. Only as a consequence of this decision, and only in order to save the life of her beloved ward, does the nurse plan an expedient. She pretends to possess a magic medicine which is able to cure the illness of the queen. She hardly dares to formulate the advice that Phædra should disclose herself to Hippolytus, and, if she (the nurse) has determined to adopt this device, her moral sense revolts at the thought that Phædra should have even a suspicion of this intention. In Racine, Phèdre here receives the news of her husband's death.

Madame. . . . .  
La mort vous a ravi votre invincible epoux  
Et ce malheur n'est plus ignoré que de vous.

And the former confidante changes into an oily-mouthed procuress.

Le roi est mort. . . . .  
Vivez ; vous n'avez plus de reproche à vous faire.  
Votre flamme devient une flamme ordinaire.  
Thésée en expirant vient de rompre les noeuds,  
Qui faisaient tout le crime et l'horreur de vos feux  
Hippolyte pour vous devient moins redoutable  
Et vous pouvez le voir sans vous rendre coupable.

Phèdre may now love her husband's son with impunity she maintains. The queen takes in her words greedily ;

Eh bien ! à tes conseils je me laisse entrainer  
Vivons.

They thoroughly accord with her own wishes and her passion uncurbed, yea, without blush, reviling her but just dead husband, she, in sight of the audience, tempts with lascivious flattery the youth who stands silent and shuddering before her. A most tragic, a most repulsive scene !



## PHÈDRE.

Sir, a man does not visit the shores of the dead a second time. Since Theseus has seen these sombre shores, it is in vain to hope that a god may send him back. The greedy Acheron does not let go its prey. What say I? He is not dead for he lives in you! I think I now see my husband before me. I see him; I speak to him, my heart. . . . Ah (aside), I know not what I say, my mad passion betrays me.

## HIPPOLYTE.

I see how strong your love is. Though Theseus is indeed dead he is still present to your eyes.

## PHÈDRE.

Yes, prince, I long, I pine for Theseus. I love him, not as he appeared in Hell, light lover of a thousand different objects of passion, ready to rob of his spouse the king of the dead, but faithful, nay wildly simple, young, splendid, drawing all hearts after him, but proud as our gods are painted and as you now appear. When he crossed the seas to Crete he had your gait, your look, your manner, the same noble modesty shone upon his face. Where were you then, Hippolyte? Why were you absent when all the Greek heroes assembled. Why were you too young to sail with them? It had been yours to slay the Cretan monster. To you my sister had given the fatal clue. But no: for that I would have forestalled her.—Love would have shewn me the way. I know I would have guided you through the labyrinth. What many cares that noble head had cost me then! No thread should have satisfied your lover. Companion of the danger you were bound to dare, I should have pressed on before you, and Phèdre descending to the labyrinth with you would there have been found or lost.

Euripides' Phædra would have been unable to conceive the thought of such an abomination. The Greek author goes in his moral delicacy so far, that he does not let her exchange a single word with Hippolytus and, until the secret of her love is made known to him, does not permit his name to be mentioned in her hearing. She fears that thereby—a thing innocent enough in itself—her criminal thoughts will become criminal deeds. Then she commands the nurse never to speak of him.

By the Gods! I entreat thee henceforth to be silent with respect to this man.

It is the nurse, therefore, who, unbeknown to Phædra, receives *from the poet* the command to declare her passion to Hippolytus. This, however, in nowise happens on the stage, only the result of this declaration, the deep indignation of the youth, is brought to the ear of the audience whilst Phædra, listening, makes known what is happening within the palace walls.

"Do you, standing at these gates, hear what the noise is that strikes on the house? The son of the warlike Amazon, Hippolytus, cries out, abusing in dreadful forms my attendant."

It shews true feeling on the part of the poet that he does not let Phædra announce what the nurse has done on her behalf, but only give utterance to the wrath of the youth, concerning the nurse's deed. The admirers of Racine find, however, a beautiful, tragical, poetical trait in the very fact that Phèdre herself undertakes this duty and that it is carried out in full sight of the audience. They call this "truly human."

That which is certainly immoral, if it must be mentioned in tragedy, ought, however, to be but delicately indicated, never represented on the open stage and a tragic, *i.e.*, a deeply noble situation can never be the result of the accomplishment

of irremediable repulsiveness. Certainly nothing can be more disgusting than to see and hear a wife and a mother, trying with hideous flattery to tempt the son of her but just deceased husband, to commit a mortal sin. The object, a heightened *coup de théâtre* and the desire to give an actress here a magnificent scene, is a very ignoble one and bound to detract from the merit of the tragedy as a whole.

The manner in which Hippolytus receives the declaration is treated by both poets with equal diversity.

Racine introduces us to the timid, frightened youth, who, according to his drawing—he is love-sick himself—has not a word of anger wherewith to confront and confound the distracted woman. In Euripides, the glowing fire of anger is kindled and bursts into terrific flame. A scene immeasurably more beautiful since it is infinitely more natural. The very mention of such a crime having reached his ears, induces him, in his innocence, to believe in the necessity of a propitiatory sacrifice.

Which impious things I will wash out with flowing stream, pouring it into my ears.

Doubting, he asks himself if he is really so wicked that people dare to let him hear such words.

How then could I be the vile one who do not even deem myself pure, because I have heard such things.

He then determines to flee the pestilential atmosphere of his father's house. From this point there is a complete divergence in the conception of the myth. Whilst Phèdre still consoles herself with the, to her, sweet thought that Hippolyte may love her,

In spite of myself hope has stolen into my heart.

Racine makes Theseus return and Phèdre is tortured by the fear of the discovery of her crimes. Then the confidante advises her to accuse the innocent youth.

Never was fear more just than yours. Why accuse yourself? It will be said that Phèdre, conscious of her own guilt, will not face her husband. Hippolyte is happy to find a witness for all his accusations in yourself. Yield not so easily the victory to him. Accuse him first of the charge he may bring against you. Who will contradict you?

Phèdre obeys her and initiates, without delay, an impeachment which Œnone is to complete. Theseus believes the women's story. It is true he knows his son to be a noble youth and he loves him tenderly. They bring him no other proof of the boy's guilt, beyond establishing the fact that Phèdre is in possession of Hippolyte's sword. Yet the women's word suffices him. Without even according his son a hearing he invokes the vengeance of Neptune who has promised him the fulfilment of three wishes.

Et toi, Neptune, et toi, si jadis mon courage  
D'infâmes assassins nettoya ton rivage  
Souviens toi, que, pour prix de mes efforts heureux  
Tu promis d'exaucer le premier de mes vœux.  
Dans les longues rigueurs d'une prison cruelle  
Je n' ai point imploré ta puissance immortelle



Avare du secours que j' attends de tes soins  
 Mes vœux t' ont réservé pour de plus grands besoins.  
 Je t' implore aujourd' hui. Venge un malheureux père.  
 J' abandonne ce traître à toute ta colère.  
 Etouffe dans son sang ses désirs effrontés.  
 Thésée à tes fureurs contraindra tes bontés.

Phèdre now begins to repent, but the sudden news that Hippolyte loves another, Aricie, kills her every good intention and she completes her villainous design. By the side of her living spouse, tortured by love and jealousy for his son who dares to love another, she, his stepmother, merely to gratify her revenge, calls down upon his head the fates in order that, at least, he may belong to none other than her.

Hippolyte is destroyed by the power of Poseidon. Phèdre now conceives the enormity of her crime. Theseus had already suspected her guilt. She confesses it to him and dies poisoned by her own hand.

In Euripides the deed of the nurse produces in the queen a state of frantic terror. She fully intended to die rather than let her shame see the light of day. Now she is betrayed; her shame, hitherto, only known to herself, is public, and the honour of her children stained by her now execrated name. All her striving has been in vain to retain the noblest possessions of life, honour and virtue, possessions of which, neither by word or deed, she made herself unworthy. Nowhere does she see deliverance for herself and her sons, nowhere a healing of the shame she has brought on her husband and on her entire race. Then her whole moral system breaks down. Her principles vanish. Her mind, deranged by the excess of her grief, quickly determines to bring Hippolytus to ruin so that her dishonour should die with her and he not triumph over her.

But when I am dead I shall bear evil to another, at least, so that he may know not to exult over my misfortunes.

It is madness that clouds her mind, and which, after she has retired to her chamber, induces her in a letter to accuse Hippolytus and then to kill herself. It is an act of insanity, the deed of a moment. Her whole moral system being shaken to its very foundations, excludes all deliberations of her own actions. It may be urged that Phædra thus destroys her whole character at one stroke, and that the impression created by her must, hence, be more repulsive to an audience than that of the character delineated by Racine.

An unpremeditated and quickly executed deed of sudden madness, the motives for which are sharply defined by previous events; the thought of the complete annihilation of the honour and happiness of a whole race together with the despair that her endeavours to avert this misery have been frustrated by another's fault; the reproaches of her own conscience passing rapidly through her mind cannot, in her present mental derangement, nullify the previously moral aspect of her character. Or, taking all her motives into consideration and carefully studying her previous thoughts and deeds, can there be any other name but madness for this sudden aberration? If, however, it be further objected that it is incompatible with the morality of her character in death to destroy the beloved one, and, since Phædra does this, she is wanting in every moral sense, one must certainly not see that just through this her act still more bears the impress of insanity since it is in



direct contradiction with her inmost feelings. It may not be reconcilable with our ideas of a noble nature, but it is none the less thoroughly Greek.

Euripides, no doubt, found it in the legend, and to him and to his age the taking of vengeance on an enemy by treacherous means was not only natural but lawful. Furthermore, seeing that Phædra designates this love as her most execrable crime, it cannot be described as a tender feeling, a pure love for Hippolytus, but must render him rather an object of loathing. In any case the acts of this Phædra are far nobler than those of Racine's who, it is true, accuses herself of having disclosed her love to Hippolyte, but stifles the voice of her would-be indignation with the flattering belief that the youth, though his heart is aglow with love for her, accorded her no hearing through bashfulness and whose accusation of the innocent Hippolyte before the very eyes of his father, into whose presence she is in no way afraid to come, is an infamy: the acts of this woman are not those of madness, but deeds well-considered, matured and executed with malice prepense, for which, from a moral point of view, no excuse can be found for her.

As for the impression made on the spectator, Racine's Phèdre appears to him less stern, because he is able to indulge in the hope that she will revoke her accusation before the destruction of Hippolyte. The death of Phædra, in Euripides, makes her deed irrevocable. But though this fills us momentarily with greater horror, can it be called a fault? Tragedy where, before our eyes, acts are developed from motives, it is impossible to view the former *per se*. The motives are given us, in order that we may in them have a criterion for judgment. We are not to criticise separately what happens during each particular moment, but we are to take the parts with the whole and to review how, of necessity, deeds are influenced by motives.

"Three sorts of spectators compose what we are accustomed to call the play-going public," says Victor Hugo. "Firstly, women; secondly, thinkers; and thirdly, the general crowd. That which the last named chiefly requires in a dramatic work is action; what most attracts women is passion; but what the thoughtful seek above all else is the portrayal of human nature. If one studies attentively these three classes of spectators this may be remarked: the crowd is so delighted with incident that often it cares little for characters and style. Women, whom action likewise interests, are so absorbed in the development of emotion that they little heed the representation of characters. As for the thoughtful, they so much desire to see characters, that is to say, living men, on the scene that, though they willingly accept passion as a natural element in a dramatic work, they are almost troubled by the incidents. Thus what the mass desires, on the stage, is sensational action, what the women seek is emotion, and what the thoughtful crave is food for meditation. All demand pleasure—the first the pleasure of the eyes; the second the gratification of the feelings, the last mental enjoyment. . . . Let us say in passing that we do not lay down an infallible law, and we entreat the reader to make for himself the restrictions which our opinion may contain. Rules always admit of exceptions; we know well that the crowd is a great body in which all qualities are to be found; the instinct for the beautiful and the taste for mediocrity, love of the ideal and liking for the matter of fact. We also know that every great intellect ought to be feminine on the tender side of the heart; and we are aware that thanks to that mysterious law which attracts the sexes to each other as well mentally as bodily very often a woman is a thinker. . . . To every man who considers seriously the three classes of spectators we have just indicated, it will be evident that all are to be justified. The women are right in



wishing to have their hearts touched ; the thinkers are right in desiring to be taught ; and the crowd is not wrong in wishing to be amused."

But the author cannot take account of those of his spectators who are wanting in mental power to reflect on what is passing before them and who destroy the pleasure of his work *as a whole* by the enjoyment of a mere momentary impression. He works for those who know how to appreciate his creation, and to such the act of madness of the Greek Phædra—though so horrifying in its exposition—will appear more noble than the doings of Racine's who tries to palliate her moral degradation by hypocrisy and destroys every moment, more and more, all hopes of her moral reformation.

Chateaubriand, however, has made use of this Phèdre of Racine with the object of showing how even in adapting classical subjects, Christianity has exercised its influence on the author. He takes Phèdre, and in opposing her to the Dido of Virgil, says : "That more passionately inflamed than the queen of Carthage she is in truth only a *Christian wife*. The fear of the avenging flames and of the terrible eternity of our Hell is visible throughout the rôle of this criminal woman and especially in Act IV, Scene VI, which as everyone knows is the invention of the modern poet. Incest was not a crime so rare or so monstrous among the ancients as to excite like horrors in the breast of the guilty one. Sophocles makes Jocasta die at the moment when she is conscious of her crime, but Euripides lets her live long after. If we believe Tertullian the misfortunes of Œdipus only excited pleasantry amongst the Macedonians. Virgil does not place Phædra in Hell, but only in those *lugentes campi*, the myrtle bowers where lovers wander who "*curae non ipsa in morte relinquunt*." The Phædra of Euripides, as also of Seneca fear Theseus more than Tartarus. Neither of them speak like Racine's Phèdre."

I jealous ! and it is Theseus whom I ask to avenge me ! My husband lives and I yet love—but whom ? What heart is that which I desire ? At each word my very hair stands erect with horror. It breathes at once imposture and incest, and my murderous hands long to plunge themselves in innocent blood. Wretch that I am, yet I live and affront the sight of that holy Sun from whom I am descended. My ancestor is father and lord of all the gods. Heaven and all the universe is filled with my kindred. Where can I hide myself ! If I go down into eternal darkness, my father Minos, there holds the fatal urn and has the fate of men in his austere hands. Ah ! how that shadow will shudder when he sees his daughter brought before him and obliged to acknowledge sins unheard of, perhaps, even in hell ! What will you say, my father, to that horrible vision ? I think, I see the awful urn fall from your hands. I think, I see you, in despair, seek out some new punishment, yourself the executioner of your child. It is the vengeance of a cruel god that has ruined your race. In your daughter's madness behold his wrath ! Alas, I have now gathered the fruits of the awful crime which disgraces me. Pursued by misfortune to my last sigh, I yield up in torment a life unsolaced by enjoyment.

"This incomparable passage," he proceeds to say, "presents a gradation of passion, a science of sadness, of the agonies and transports of the soul, that the ancients never knew. With them one finds, so to say, a sketching out of sentiments, but rarely a complete picture of them. Here the heart is everything :

C'est Venus tout entière à sa proie attachée.

and the most awful expression that passion perhaps ever gave vent to is

Hélas ! du crime affreux dont la honte me suit  
Jamais mon triste cœur n' a recueilli le fruit.

"Here is a combination of passion and soul, of despair and passionate love that defies all expression. This woman who would console herself with an eternity of suffering, if she had tasted a moment of happiness, this woman is not in the antique. It is a *Christian* woman reproved for her sins, the sinner fallen into the hands of the living God. His word the sentence of the damned."

I do not wish to examine this statement closely, but I can hardly accept as a typical *épouse chrétienne* the woman who speaking to C  none of Hippolyte and Aricie says :

Ils s'aimeront toujours.

Au moment que je parle, ah ! mortelle pens  e  
 Ils bravent la fureur d'une amante incens  e  
 Malgr   ce m  me exil qui va les   carter.  
 Non, je ne puis souffrir un bonheur qui m'outrage.  
 C  none, prends piti   de ma jalouse rage.  
 Il faut perdre Aricie. Il faut de mon   poux  
 Contre un sang odieux r  veiller le courroux.  
 Qu' il ne se borne pas a des peines l  g  res.  
 Le crime de la s  ur passe des fr  res.  
 Dans mes jaloux transports je le veux implorer.

Racine has, however, dealt worst of all with Theseus, after he heard of his son's accusation. He is depicted as a credulous, weak-minded man whose wife's unproved accusation is enough to condemn, unheard, a beloved son of whose virtue he is, by his own observation, fully convinced ; is enough, to call upon his head the most deadly curse. It is otherwise in Euripides. Hippolytus, a pupil of Pitthe  s, educated in the house, only returns to his father shortly before the commencement of the tragedy. Theseus thus knows the moral strength of the youth's character but little. Yes, the very fact that Pitthe  s had initiated him into the Eleusinian mysteries and that he was leading an ascetic life had made the sturdy warrior suspicious of his son, whom he—to use a modern expression—was ready to regard as a pietist in the worst acceptance of the term. He then, and this is the climax, found the accusation of his son in the hand of his *dead* wife. His living wife, his own suspicions notwithstanding, he would not have believed without the strongest proofs and would never have condemned his son, unheard. But death was "the surest witness" of the deceased before the force of which, taking the circumstantial evidence into consideration, all proof to the contrary vanished. All these considerations Racine had laid aside and Theseus' act appears to be nothing but wanton.

It may not be superfluous to point out how this death of Ph  dra in its relation to the action of Theseus is necessitated in a still higher degree, since without it a noble and well-conceived sketch of the husband would have been an impossibility. He could, however, never have been represented as a weak-minded man, who believes anything and everything without the slightest deliberation. The only possible foundation on which the further structure of the tragedy could be built, without introducing motiveless situations, was the accusation in the hand of the *dead* Ph  dra. Both poets let Hippolytus suffer his father's anger without any explanation on the part of the former. With the Greek this silence is a necessary consequence of that which has preceded. Hippolytus, previous to the nurse's declaration, had vowed secrecy with a most solemn oath, and his deep religiousness makes it impossible for him to break his vow. With whatever force he is able to urge his defence, one thing, Ph  dra's deed, he leaves untouched, prepared rather to suffer the worse than to perjure himself. In Racine, we seek in vain for a motive inducing the youth to a similar course of action. No oath binds him. It is evident,



that the fear of wounding his father's honour was unworthy of consideration, since that honour left to the care of a degenerated woman was in immeasurably greater danger.

Hippolyte, in Racine, killed by the power of Neptune, disappears from the scene. The only crime for which he has to suffer his awful lot is his virtuous resistance to the criminal love of his stepmother. The Aricie episode, which Racine says he has introduced to make the youth less perfect, does certainly not supply sufficient justification for his death. It appears, therefore, as a poetical injustice quite incompatible with the tragedy.

Not so with Euripides. According to the opinion of the ancients he had committed a crime, likely to draw upon him the vengeance of a deity, and it is this that softens to a certain extent the repulsiveness of seeing an otherwise perfectly innocent man suffer. It was a commandment amongst the Greeks to worship *all* the gods. This commandment Hippolytus had outrageously violated, in that he had not only neglected the worship of Venus Aphrodite, but also heaped abuses on her.

*Att.* How is it that thou addressest not a venerable goddess ?

*Hipp.* Whom ? But take heed that thy mouth err not.

*Att.* Venus who hath her station at thy gate.

*Hipp.* I, who am chaste, salute her at a distance.

*Att.* Venerable is she, however, and of note among mortals.

*Hipp.* Different gods and men are objects of regard to different persons.

*Att.* May you be blest having as much sense as you require.

*Hipp.* No one of the gods that is worshipped by night delight me.

*Ass.* My son, we must conform to the honour of the Gods.

*Hipp.* ..... But to your Venus, I bid a long farewell.

As a punishment for such a crime, the goddess had inspired Phædra with her unnatural love which became the cause of the ruin of Hippolytus.

"Great in the sight of mortals, and not without a name am I, the goddess Venus, and in heaven ; and of as many as dwell within the ocean and the boundaries of Atlas beholding the light of the sun ; those indeed who reverence my authority I advance to honour ; but overthrow as many as hold themselves high towards me. For this is, in sooth, a property inherent even in the race of the gods, that they rejoice when honoured by men. But quickly will I shew the truth of these words : For the son of Theseus, born of the Amazon, Hippolytus pupil of the chaste Pittheus, alone of all the inhabitants of this land of Troezen says, that I am of deities the vilest and rejects the bridal bed and will have nothing to do with marriage . . . . But wherein he has erred towards me I will avenge me on Hippolytus this very day. . . . For Phædra, his father's noble wife, having seen him, was smitten in her heart with fierce love by my design."

It is not at all necessary to suppose that Venus imputed unchastity to Hippolytus. The ancients had also their Venus Urania, but even she would, at length, have revolted at the continual revilings of the youth.

The poet intentionally makes us, at the very outset, acquainted with the youth's crime in this respect, but disdaining words of warning, ruin breaks in upon him. Racine could not make use of the motive imputed by Euripides since he paints Hippolytus as worshipping—in his love for Aricie, at the shrine of this very Venus Aphrodite. The discovery of the crime, the despair of Theseus and the suicide of Phædre, are but inadequate amends for the suffering of Hippolyte. The higher poetical atonement necessary for tragedy is here completely wanting, and with conflicting emotions the spectator turns from a tissue of horrors and corruption.

Euripides, in this also, understood the feelings of the human heart much better.



Theseus, to whom the death of his wife was the surest proof of his son's guilt, could only be enlightened by a higher power. Artemis, the guardian goddess of Hippolytus, appears and instructs the unhappy father of the true cause of his misery.

"Thee, the noble son of Ægeus, I command to listen, but it is, I, Diana, daughter of Latona, who am addressing thee. . . . For Venus willed that these things should be in order to satiate her rage."

She also reveals herself to the youth. He feels the "divine breathing of perfume"; his strength returns for a moment and his "body is lightened of its pain." He hears that he remains beloved of the gods and, as a reward for his sufferings, Artemis promises him divine honours and immortality of name. Reconciled with his father, he expires in his arms. He had erred, but his virtue, which withstood the terrible temptation, had reconciled even the gods themselves and in blissful peace he closed his eyes.

The material differences of both tragedies and the superior value of the work of Euripides it will, now, not be difficult to understand. Racine made use of the myth supplied by the old tragedian, some of whose ideas he has followed in his own scenes. The motives, however, which makes the works of Euripides so sublime, he has completely obliterated. His character lacks moral force, most of the situations are only *des coups de théâtre*, and the effect of the whole, though exciting enough, is far from satisfactory. The very reverse of all this, in its highest consummation, is to be found in Euripides.

The French opinion of the status of French writers with regard to the Greek tragedians is best seen in Voltaire. Lessing, quoting him says: "After Voltaire had finished his *Zaire* and *Alzire*, had produced his *Brutus* and *Cæsar*, he was confirmed in his opinion that the tragedians of his nation were, in many respects, immeasurably superior to the Greeks. "They might have learnt from us Frenchmen," says Voltaire, "a more clever exposition and the great art so to combine the entrances with one another, that the stage is never vacant and that no person has his entry or exit without reason. They might have learnt from us how rivals converse in witty antitheses; how the poet with a flow of sublime and brilliant thoughts ought to dazzle and surprise." Indeed! says Lessing, "what could not be learnt from the French! A foreigner here and there, however, who had read his classics might humbly beg to be allowed to differ. . . . But what is the use of objecting to anything of M. de Voltaire. He speaks and the people believe." "Voltaire," writes Professor Mahaffy, "at one time, carried away by the admiration of the new against the old, said many insolent and unjust things about the Greek masters as compared with the French. Perhaps La Harpe is the most insolent of all when, in his book on literature, he boldly states that the chief merit of Sophocles is to have inspired Racine, and that Euripides may be excused, because he suggested a *Medea* to Corneille."

It may be that the ordinary theatre-goer, who prefers the whiling away of a few idle hours, in an amusing fashion, to the satisfaction experienced in witnessing the production of a work of art, may look upon the Greek tragedy in its arrangement and its succinctness as too bold and not piquant enough. A man of truly refined taste will find pleasure in the sublime simplicity and moral nobility of the composition, and its beauties will impress him the more, the more sincerely he regrets to see that which is noble and sublime vanishing from the stage, giving place, in deference to a vitiated taste, to that which is grotesque, distorted, and detrimental to true art.

# Goethe's "Faust."

# GOULD'S "JOURNAL"



## GOETHE'S "FAUST."

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FIFTY years ago Thomas Carlyle wrote as follows:—"Germany is no longer to any person the vacant land of grey vapour and dim chimeras which it was to most Englishmen not many years ago. One may hope, that as readers of German increased a hundredfold, some partial intelligence of Germany, some interest in things German may have increased in a proportionately higher ratio." If these words were true in '38, with how much greater force do they not apply to-day? Yet, notwithstanding the teaching of the language in schools and colleges, notwithstanding our intercourse with many sons of the Fatherland, we are, as a nation, grievously deficient in a knowledge of the beauties of the literature of the German language. The subject, the title of which heads this essay, is the greatest, the loftiest, the most sublime poem of the most renowned of the sons of Germany.

We are on the threshold of the most mystic poetical work ever created. The commentaries written on it form a library in themselves, and yet they do not explain it. Making use of translations which I have found at hand, with a few additions of my own, I shall let the author speak the words he places in the mouth of his characters. One word about the renderings into English. I quote from a critic: "No poetical translation can give the rhythm and rhyme of the original; it can only substitute the rhythm and rhyme of the translator, and for the sake of this substitute we must renounce some portion of the original sense and nearly all the expressions. The sacred and mysterious union of thought with verse, twin-born and immortally wedded from the moment of their common birth, can never be understood by those who desire verse translation of good poetry."

I am, however, fully aware, that there have been cases in which "verse translations of good poetry" have been given to the world. I refer to Swinburne's rendering of Victor Hugo, and Longfellow's translation of *La Divina Commedia*, but these I take to be the exemplification of the exception proving the rule.

Goethe's work is not merely an artistic creation; it is the product of the innermost sentiments of his soul, and he has caused it to appear as a cycle of ballads intermixed with lyrical soliloquies, which, taken together, have sequence of action, leaving out, however, the joining portions.

Faust was first published in 1806, after a slow development through many years. The ballad of the King of Thule, the first monologue and the first scene with Wagner, were written in 1774-75. From that time onward Goethe made fragmentary additions from time to time. In 1797 he remodelled the whole work, then added the two prologues and the *Walpurgisnacht*. In 1801, the work was finished. "The marionette fable of Faust," he said, "murmured with many voices in my soul. I, too, had wandered into every department of knowledge and had returned early enough satisfied with the vanity of science. And life, too, I had tried under various aspects and always came back sorrowing and unsatisfied." Morley remarks: "Most of all, Faust is the direct utterance of his own inner life, with the intensity and the repose of thought that through the man himself and his own life problems touched all humanity in a time of revolution, when minds exulted

in the new sense of recovered power. Goethe solved no riddle of life, but he expressed himself and through himself a world of newly awakened thought among men, with the full sincerity that is of the essence of all high artistic power."

I think it may be stated without fear of contradiction that it was from the marionette fable that Goethe drew his first inspiration, and I would almost maintain that the original *Puppenspiel* was derived either directly or indirectly from Marlowe. Certain it is that the puppet play forms the connecting link between Goethe and Marlowe. It may further be averred that in England the puppet-show had already reached its *nadir* previous to anything being heard of it in Germany.

The material out of which the tragedy is built up is a legend, and even one of the most modern. Poetry and history often go hand in hand. Thus in the Middle Ages out of the turmoil and trouble of the migration of nations, we have, poetically, its representation in the "*Nibelungenlied*." The legend is therefore the soul of history of a particular period which becomes, as it were, crystallized in the national poetry of a people. The genius of poetry must soar to such an elevation, that it may cast its glances back into the past and prophetically into the future. Such poetical conception is shadowed forth amongst the Greeks in the history of Prometheus. Regarded in this light the fable assumes a new aspect. Having robbed fire from Olympus, made man and warmed him with the same fire, the gods chained the thief to a rock. There he prophesied the destruction of the deities of the old world. For with Prometheus the Hellenes received a new enlightenment, a new task, viz., to identify the working forces in nature in their most complete ideal appearance with humanity; obtained the knowledge that the old world had fulfilled its laws, was doomed to death.

The question naturally arises, in how far does Goethe's Faust come up to this standard? The answer is not far to seek. Prometheus is the Faust of the old world. The apotheosis of the natural religion of the Greeks was encircled by the entity of this world, enclosing even the gods. What was beyond was consigned to the formless *Moirae*. In overstepping the sacred limits the Erinnyes punished the evil doer. As Hesiod has it—

"Then the Destinies  
Arose and Fates in vengeance pitiless,  
Clotho and Lachesis and Atropos  
Who at the birth of men dispense the lot  
Of good and evil. They of men and gods  
The crimes pursue, nor even pause from wrath  
Tremendous till destructive on the head  
Of him that sins, the retribution fall."

It is this idea that must be constantly kept in mind for the better—nay, for the proper—understanding of antique Greek tragedy, otherwise the door will be left open to numberless misconceptions.

The visible world was therefore interested with man on this side of the grave only. He was a reality only as long as he lived, after death came the region of shadows. This purely sensual existence was bound to culminate like everything sensual in the cultus, the worship of bodily beauty. This cultus received its highest polish among the Greeks; but the moment the principle had pronounced itself, it was itself doomed. The antithesis, namely the immortality of the soul, appeared as the reality. This antithesis was Christianity, which wrecked the old world of gods and goddesses. Sensual man became sinful man; for the world of sensuality



became the world of the devil. Even Venus was transformed into a she-devil, as afterwards the whole old world, and even nature itself, was regarded as the work of Satanic powers from which only the mortification of the flesh and the death of Christ could save us.

The whole period of the Middle Ages was busy with this work of redemption, and the fight was the more terrible as every being, participating in the nature of an angel and a devil, was battling against the spirit of austerity and the demon of sensuality. The religious fanaticism of the Middle Ages, having by means of the crusades extended to Asia, was confronted at its zenith by the demon Doubt. Fanaticism decreased and humanity commenced questioning the legality of its oppression. This turning point of history has been most forcibly portrayed by Lessing in his *Nathan the Wise*. In the fifth scene of the third act, Nathan, a liberal Israelite, famous for his wisdom, is summoned to appear before the Sultan Saladin in his palace. The Israelite expects that some loan of money will be demanded, and is therefore surprised when he finds that the Sultan wishes to talk of the three creeds professed in Palestine. Of these three only one can be true, says Saladin, who now commands Nathan to state, in confidence, his own sincere belief. The Israelite requests that before he gives a direct answer he may be allowed to recite a parable, and when permission has been given, he thus proceeds—

NATHAN.—In the oldest times in an eastern land  
 There lived a man who had a precious ring.  
 The gem, an opal of a hundred tints,  
 Had such a virtue as would make the wearer  
 Who trusted it, beloved by God and man.  
 What wonder if the man who had this ring  
 Preserved it well, and by his will declared  
 It should for ever in his house remain?  
 At last, when death came near, he called the son  
 Whom he loved best and gave to him the ring  
 With one strict charge. "My son when you must die  
 Let this be given to your own darling child,  
 The son whom you love best, without regard  
 To any right of birth."—'Twas thus the ring  
 Was always passed on to the best beloved.  
 Sultan, you understand me?

SULTAN.— Yes—go on.

NATHAN.—A father, who at last possessed this ring,  
 Had three dear sons, all dutiful and true,  
 All three alike beloved. But at one time  
 This son, and then another seemed most dear,  
 Most worthy of the ring; and it was given  
 By promise, first to this son, then to that,  
 Until it might be claimed by all the three.  
 At last when death drew nigh the father felt  
 His heart disturbed by the doubt to whom  
 The ring was due. He could not favour one  
 And leave two sons in grief. How did he act?  
 He called a goldsmith in, gave him the gem,  
 And bade him make exactly of that form  
 Two other rings and spare not cost nor pains  
 To make all three alike. And this was done  
 So well, the owner of the first true ring  
 Could find no shade of difference in the three.



And now he called his sons, one at a time  
And gave to each a blessing and a ring,  
One of the three—and died.

SULTAN.— Well ! well, go on.

NATHAN.— My tale is ended. You may guess the sequel.  
The father dies. Immediately each one  
Comes forward with his ring and asks to be  
Proclaimed as head and ruler of the house.  
All three assert one claim and show their rings  
All made alike. To find the first, the true,  
It was as great a puzzle, as for us  
To find the one true faith—

SULTAN.— Is that then all the answer I must have ?

NATHAN.— 'Tis my apology, if I decline  
To act as judge, or to select the ring,  
The one true gem of all three made alike.  
All given by one.

SULTAN.— There, talk no more of rings.

The three religions that at first were named  
Are all distinct, aye down to dress, food, drink—

NATHAN.— Just so, and yet their claims are all alike,  
As founded upon history, on facts,  
Believed and handed down from sire to son,  
Uniting them in faith. Can we, the Jews,  
Distrust the testimony of our race,  
Distrust the men who gave us birth, whose love  
Did ne'er deceive us, but when we were babes  
Taught us, by means of fables, for our good.  
Must you distrust your own true ancestors  
To favour mine ? Or must a Christian doubt  
His father's word and so agree with ours ?—  
Let me name the rings once more.  
The sons at last in bitter strife  
Appeared before a judge, and each declared  
He had the one true ring, given by his father.  
All said the same, and all three spoke the truth.  
Each rather then suspect his father's words  
Accused his brethren of a fraud.

SULTAN.— What then !

What sentence could the judge pronounce ? Go on.

NATHAN.— Thus said the judge. Go bring your father here.  
Let him come forth or I dismiss the case.  
Must I sit guessing riddles, must I wait  
Till the true ring shall speak out for itself ?  
But stay. 'Twas said that the authentic gem  
Had value that would make the wearer loved  
By God and man. That shall decide the case.  
Tell me, who of the three is best beloved  
By his two brethren ? Silent ? Then the ring  
Hath lost its charm. Each claimant loves himself  
But wins no love. The rings are forgeries.  
'Tis plain, the first authentic gem was lost.  
To keep his word with you and hide his loss  
Your father had these three rings made,  
These three instead of one.  
But stay, the judge continued, hear one word,  
The best advice I have to give, then go.

Let each still trust the ring, given by his father.  
 It might be he would shew no partial love.  
 He loved all three and therefore would not give  
 The ring to one and grieve the other two.  
 Go emulate your father's equal love.  
 Let each first test his ring and shew its power,  
 But aid it while you test. Be merciful,  
 Forbearing, kind to all men and submit  
 Your will to God. Such virtues shall increase  
 Whatever powers the rings themselves may have.  
 When these among your late posterity  
 Have shewn their virtue—in some future time  
 A thousand, thousand years away from now  
 Then hither come again! A wiser man  
 Than one now sitting here will hear you then  
 And will pronounce the sentence.  
 Now, Saladin, art thou the wiser man?  
 Art thou the judge who will at last pronounce the sentence?

SULTAN. — I the judge, I'm dust, I'm nothing,  
 'Tis Allah, Nathan! Now I understand.  
 The thousand, thousand years have not yet passed.  
 The judge is not yet come. I must not place  
 Myself upon his throne. I understand,  
 Farewell, dear Nathan. Go, be still my friend.

The battle between the spirit of Christianity and the devil of sensuality is represented in the tragedy of Faust. We must, therefore, not forget that the two principal figures of the work, Faust and Mephistopheles, really represent one man divided into halves. Mephisto who, it is true, first appears as a dog, represents the animal nature in man, in the being of Faust. He is, therefore, made to appear almost identical with Faust as far as his costume is concerned, though somewhat toned down. They appear as two brothers, one of whom has ennobled himself by the most subtle speculations of the mind; the other thrown himself completely into the arms of sensuality. And now to the tragedy.

Faust, a doctor of metaphysics, has fallen out with his own little world, the Christian one of the Middle Ages, with its Philosophy, Law, Medicine, and, unfortunately, with its Theology also. He wants to know at what point a man is to believe only. His speculations have led him so far, that he is unable to quench his thirst after knowledge—

“To feel that nothing can be known—  
 This is the thought that burns into my heart.”

He is surrounded by books and old dusty parchments. Law, Physic, Divinity, all these he derides as dry abstractions and dead formulae, conferring on the student no power to control the boundless energies and resources of nature.

“Alas I have explored  
 Philosophy, and Law and Medicine,  
 And over deep Divinity have pored,  
 Studying with ardent and laborious zeal,  
 And here I am, at last, a very fool  
 With useless learning curst,  
 No wiser than at first.”



(This scene is the only part in which the Dr. Faustus of Marlowe bears any similarity to that of Goethe.) He opens a book of magic and after contemplating with rapture the sign of the Macrocosm, pronounces mystically the sign of the Spirit of the Earth. He quails before the apparition and the spirit vanishes with an expression of contempt—

“Man, thou art as the spirit, whom thou conceivest, not as me.”

Faust cannot bear the sight of it. The Spirit of the Earth disappears and the spirit which he can comprehend, Wagner, confronting him as his equal, appears and takes its place. The character of this dry-as-dust pedant, is admirably contrasted with that of Faust. In Wagner we see a man who looks upon the dry bones and mere lumber of erudition, as choice meat and drink for the intellectual constitution—in a word a man who has passed the goal when learning and knowledge are a pleasure; who, theoretically, has passed the goal, and fancies he can comprehend what lies beyond.

“Oh with what difficulty are the means  
Acquired that lead us to the springs of knowledge,  
And when the path is found, ere we have trod  
Half the long way, poor wretches, we must die.”

Wagner departs and Faust is once more alone, nay doubly alone. He seeks a new idea in the world of negation with which he has surrounded himself. Nothing remains to him except Despair, and he thus resolves to die rather than continue an existence of misery. Suicide stares him ghastly in the face. With the words—

“I greet thee, comforter,”

he raises the vial with poison to his lips. He does not desire to cross the barrier of life in order to destroy himself, but, rather, to spy into the secrets of the world beyond, of eternity.

“Image of God. I thought that I had been  
Sublimed from earth, no more a child of clay;  
That, shining gloriously with heaven's own day,  
I had beheld Truth's countenance serene.”

With all his doubts he fears the Unknown Beyond, and although trying to encourage himself, he is lacking in fortitude to take his own life.

“I am not like the Gods. No, no, I tremble,  
Feeling impressed upon my mind the thought  
Of the mean worm, whose nature I resemble;  
'Tis dust and lives in dust.”

At this very moment old Christian associations crowd forcibly upon him, and his resolution is shaken by the distant peal of bells and the hymn of Christendom on Easter morn—

“Christ hath risen ”  
Out of death's prison.”

Tears came to his eyes and with the words—

“Ye call me back to life again, sweet bells,”



he resigns his dread intention. Easter is not only a Christian festival, it represents the birth of nature also in all phases of life, animal and vegetable. Physically his suicide was not accomplished, spiritually it was. In that fell Easter night he killed the old Faust. The negation of Christianity has a real existence in him, in the awakening of the chaotic animal-nature of his being. He feels this himself,

“In my breast  
Alas ! two souls dwell ; all there is unrest ;  
Each with the other strives for mastery,  
Each from the other struggles to be free,  
One to the fleshy joys the coarse earth yields  
With clumsy tendrils clings, and one would rise  
In massive power, and vindicate the fields,  
Its own by birthright, its ancestral skies.”

Comparing this rendering with the original, the reader will, I am convinced, fully agree with the critic I quoted at the opening. This translation but feebly renders :

*Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach ! in meiner Brust  
Die Eine will sich von der Anderen trennen  
Die Eine hält in derber Liebeslust.  
Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen  
Die Andere hebt gewaltsam sich vom Duft  
Zu den Gefühlen hoher Ahnen.*

His two souls actually sever themselves and commence the conflict before our very eyes. That which happens on the theatre of his soul, if I may be permitted to use the term, we see represented externally as a dog moving round about him, which animal he entices towards him and takes home. It will be understood as natural that the poet has invested this creature with all the customary addenda of Satan, who, however, must always remain the devil of sensuality. On Easter evening we find Faust again in his study. Reason has come back, Hope blossoms afresh in his bosom. He longs for something, the Unknown, but only for a short period. This desire he strives to quench in the perusal of the New Testament. He reads the exegesis of John the Evangelist.

’Tis written : In the beginning was the Word.  
Once more : In the beginning was the Thought.  
It should rather stand : In the beginning was the Power.  
No—boldly I write : In the beginning was the Act.

The dog commences to growl. The doctor soon perceives that the cur partakes of the nature of the demon. The anti-Christian element, the creaturelike, sensual negation of spirituality, Faust’s *alter ego*, Mephisto, then appears. Such a demoniacal being is part of the nature of every man. The more it is ill-treated the more it strives to show itself ; for man is not all spirit, but partakes of the nature of a brute. If the latter is to serve the former, it must sensibly be held in subjection. Rider and horseman are one so long as the equestrian has his steed under control. If it be ill-treated they soon become two beings. Animal nature, becoming free, knows no bounds, it uses its animal instinct only to laugh at all restraint. Its principle is therefore one of negation, a spirit of destruction, a spirit which always denies. Since, however, the whole natural and spiritual being of man is a conflict of con-

traditions, creating new life, Mephisto is bound to confess himself to be a portion of that power which always desires evil yet always works out good.

*Ein Theil von jener Kraft,  
Die stets des Böse will and stets das Gute schafft.*

Faust does not understand his subtle meaning and then Mephistopheles explains:—

I am the spirit that evermore denies,  
And rightly so, for all that doth arise  
Deserves to perish. This distinctly seeing,  
No ! say I, No ! to everything that tries  
To bubble into being.  
My proper element is what you name  
Sin, Dissolution, in a word, the Bad.

Since everything lawless eventually becomes chaotic, he declares himself part of it. Faust opposes him with Reason, but the son of chaos lacks reason, he possessed only sufficient instinct to destroy. Mephistopheles now tries to escape from the room. In order to show how narrow-minded the spirit which always denies must be, Mephisto is caused to stop on the threshold where a geometrical figure is suspended representing the outspoken reasoning of mathematics. Before he can quit the room it is necessary that Faust should be hushed to sleep, and a rat, conjured up by the devil, destroys the figure. The demon then disappears. Faust awakes and fancies he has been dreaming. This is the case. He has been conversing with the chaotic element of the dual existence which is represented to us, the audience, in Mephisto, for he portrays the dark side of human nature, and, in this particular instance, of Faust. However, the Satanic element in Mephisto is more in his words than anything else.

In the demon's humoristic actions in Auerbach's cellar, Faust sees his *alter ego* in a new light, a personification of what he himself desires to be ; a polished man of the world. He longs for a realistic life, the quick death on the field of battle, or the intoxicating dance with a maiden on his arm. Only a remnant of childish feeling kept him from committing suicide by poison. It was only an illusion, he curses every other ; glory, possessions, faith, hope, love, and above all things, patience. He thus destroys his ideal world and offers himself with open arms to the realistic, sensual one of Mephisto. The speech of the tempter is very subtle. He advises the renunciation of philosophy, and the full enjoyment of all sensual pleasures the world affords. Faust is unable to agree with his tempter, but concludes a bargain with him to the following effect:—

Done ! say I, clench we at once the bargain.  
If ever time should flow so calmly on,  
Soothing my spirits in such oblivion  
That in the pleasant trance I would arrest  
And hail the happy moment in its course,  
Bidding it linger with me—Oh ! how fair  
Art thou, delicious moment ! Happy days  
Why will ye flee ! Fair vision ! Yet a little  
Abide with me and bless me, fly not yet—  
Or words like these, then throw me into fetters.  
Then willingly do I consent to perish ;



Faust's whole temperament is changed, and he says :

By heaven, she is a lovely child,  
A fairer never met my eye,  
Modest she seems and good and mild,  
Tho' something pert was her reply.  
The red lips bright, the cheeks soft light  
(My youth hath not departed quite.)  
She passed her timid eyes declining,  
Deep in my heart they still are shining,  
And her light spirit's lively play  
Hath stolen me from myself away.

Faust has become purely sensual. He utters the words quoted, and turning round and beholding Mephisto he commands him to bring the maiden within his reach.

Next we find Gretchen in her own room. Faust's appearance and his impudent address have not been without effect, and inquisitiveness, the old snake of Paradise, moves her—

I'd give anything did I but know  
Who the gentleman was that spoke to me.

Her speeches are short, her thoughts as yet trouble her but little. She leaves, and Faust and Mephisto enter. Surrounded by the spiritual presence of Gretchen, he commences to feel the germ of true love towards her. Here then, the great secret is hinted at, spiritual man can only be saved by eternal love. No heavenly bliss can come through our own strength alone, it can only be obtained with the assistance of divine grace. Mephisto, the spirit of sensuality, is obliged to aid in this salvation, against his will, of course, because he cannot conceive that he must remain at the service of a higher power whatever he may do. Naturally this feeling is repulsive to him and he desires to be gone. Previous to his departure he has placed a small casket of jewels on the table as a present for Gretchen. She, on re-entering, finds the chamber close and expresses her fears, wishing her mother were at home. The sweet poison of love seems to be taking effect more and more, as if an arrow-head had entered her wounded heart. Whilst busying herself about the room, she sings the beautiful and simple ballad of the King of Thule—

There was a king in Thule  
And he loved a humble maid,  
And she also loved him truly  
When he came to her deathbed.

A golden cup she gave him  
Which none could better prize,  
And ever as he drank of it  
Tears dimmed his flaming eyes.

And when he came to die  
To his heirs his wealth he told,  
Left all without a sigh  
But his mistress' cup of gold.

As at the royal banquet  
Among his knights sat he  
In the high hall of his fathers,  
In their fortress o'er the sea.



Up stood the gay old monarch,  
 For the last time up he stood,  
 For the last time drained the blessed cup  
 And threw it in the flood.

He saw it falling, falling,  
 And sinking in the sea,  
 His eyes lost sight of it, and sank  
 And never more drank he.

Gretchen now finds the casket and fancies it is something which has been pawned with her mother. She adorns herself with the jewels, and this opportunity causes the vanity of woman and the envy of the poor against the rich to appear. In such a short period the army of passions develop themselves—up to the most intense one—Love, in the flames of which Gretchen is to burn like Phœnix. But the jewels which were to gain Gretchen for Faust have had a different lot. In the next scene we learn that the mother has given them to a priest for the benefit of the Church. Mephisto is besides himself, he is in the greatest state of uneasiness, especially as he has become subservient to the Christianity of the priests. The play therefore changes here, the scoffer becomes the scoffed one, and that by Faust who commands him to obtain some more jewelry. As Faust has a contrast in Mephisto, so Gretchen has one in Martha. She is Gretchen's neighbour. We look into her room and hear her complaining that her husband has gone to the wars and is perhaps dead. Her selfishness shows itself in the words—

—Oh, horrors !  
 If I only had the certificate of his death !

To such an egotistical being Gretchen comes, having found the new jewels, but kept the knowledge of them a secret from her mother. Martha advises continued secrecy, and gives her permission to come to her whenever she wants to wear the jewels. Here Gretchen gives Mephisto an opportunity of approaching her. He comes to see Martha under pretence of bringing her news of her deceased husband,

Your husband's dead and sends his love.

the spirit of contradiction again manifesting itself. During their conversation we gain an insight into the utter depravity of Martha's nature—the zenith of animal egotism.

Mephisto at length wants to be gone. Martha, however, desires the certificate of death, and the Evil One soon finds a way out of the difficulty. He will, he says, prove the truth of his assertion by means of two witnesses and thus he finds a means of introducing Faust—

By good luck at present  
 There's one in town, who to the fact can speak  
 A man of character and high condition  
 He'll make the necessary deposition  
 I'll bring him in the evening.  
 MARTHA— Don't be later.

And thus the appointment is made, the invitation having been given in proper form.

In the garden then, behind my house  
 We shall expect both gentlemen  
 This evening there. Farewell till then.

Then may the death-bell peal its heavy sounds ;  
 Then is thy service at an end, and then  
 The clock may cease to strike, the hands to move ;  
 For me be time then passed away for ever.

Then with his blood he signs the compact ; for the blood, according to early Christian ideas, was Satan's particular property ; whereupon all the beauties of his future life are laid before him. Meanwhile a young student comes to see the professor. Faust declines the interview and Mephisto decides to take his place. A conversation ensues on the respective merits of the various branches of learning. The student confesses his aversion to the particular branch of knowledge he is to study. Mephisto encourages him to persevere by adorning the subject with sensual pictures. The student replies, and ever and again we see the devil, pure and simple, try to peep out from under the professor's gown. Having had many a hard hit at Metaphysics, Jurisprudence and Theology, the conversation at last turns upon Medicine. Here we see the devil's devilry set free—

STUDENT— Parlon, I feel my questions tease you,  
 Just for a moment more ; one word on  
 Medicine, so please you—

MEPHIS.— I'm sick of this pedantic tone,  
 Too long assumed. Now for my own !  
 The trade of Medicine's easiest of all.  
 'Tis but to study all things, everywhere,  
 Nature and man, the great world and the small,  
 Then leave them all haphazard still to fare.  
 It is, you see, plainly impossible  
 That one man should be skilled in every science.  
 Who learns the little that he can, does well ;  
 The secret of the art is self-reliance.  
 A man can learn but what he can ;  
 Who hits the moment hits the man.  
 You are well made—have common sense,  
 And do not want for impudence.  
 Be fearless—others will confide no less  
 When you are confident of your success.  
 The only obstacle is indecision.  
 But above all, win to yourself the women,  
 They have their thousand weaknesses and aches,  
 And the one cure for them is the physician.  
 A due consideration for the sex  
 Will teach the value of decorous seeming.  
 Let but appearances be unsuspecting,  
 They are every thing their doctor wishes.  
 The title doctor is essential,  
 Our university credential,  
 That as in one approved and tried  
 They may undoubtingly confide.  
 Then in the very earliest stage  
 Of new acquaintanceship you lead 'em,  
 Enjoying every privilege  
 Of tête-a-tête's familiar freedom ;  
 Altho' the young physician's eyes  
 Exhibit, half-and-half disguise  
 Something like tenderness, the while



Mingling with the habitual guile  
 Of the sly acquiescent smile.  
 Then may you feel the taper wrist,  
 Nor will there one of them resist  
 The hand professionally prest,  
 —Professionally, mind you!—on her breast,  
 Or round her waist the free arm thrown  
 To feel how much too tight her zone.

STUDENT— This seems more feasible. One sees  
 Something like reason in all this—  
 Winning the household through the wife.

The student listens further to the arch-enemy, and presenting him an album, requests him to favour him with some pithy motto. Mephisto writes :

*Eritis sicut Deus scientes bonum et malum,*

and the student departs with satisfaction, as if he had found a treasure.

Faust and Mephisto now make their first excursion into the realistic world. We meet them in Auerbach's beer cellar. In order to understand the joviality of this scene, one ought to be well acquainted with this particular phase of German student life, which has absolutely nothing in England or France to which it can be compared. The hilarity of the assembly is great, and the satanic humour of Mephisto appears more and more. As an example Mephisto changes the table in Auerbach's cellar into a wine barrel ; and quite naturally, for, says he, if wood, that is the vine can produce soft luscious fruits—grapes ; yea, even a goat out of flesh and blood, hard horns, why not inversely the solid table the liquid wine ?

But this kind of life does not suit Faust, he must be tempted with something more refined. He is then taken to the witches' kitchen to be restored to youth and beauty. A vigorous, handsome, enterprising youth takes the place of the professor of metaphysics. Faust, under guidance of Mephisto, now becomes a materialist of the most advanced school ; he renounces the ideal ; everything that cannot be made really enjoyable.

Hearken !

Henceforth do I devote myself and yield  
 Heart, soul and life to rapturous enjoyment,  
 Such dizzy sweet, intoxicating joy,  
 As when we stand upon a precipice  
 Makes reel the giddy sense and the brain whirl.  
 From this day forward am I dedicate  
 To the indulgence of tempestuous passions,  
 Love agonizing, idolizing hatred,  
 Cheering vexation and all that animates  
 And is our nature.

It is contrived whilst in this mood he shall meet the heroine of the drama, Margarethe, the representative of Nature herself, in all the innocence imagined by poets and mystics. Gretchen is seen coming out of church, from confession, where she has had nothing to confess. She represents the pure womanly being previous to the fall. The service has ended, the congregation is dispersing when Margarethe arrives. Faust follows her. He is at her side. He politely offers her his arm, and is emphatically refused—

*Bin weder Fräulein, weder schön  
 Kann ungeleitet nach Hause geh'n.*



Through the influence of the animal elements of the male, as depicted in Mephisto, the female in Martha, the two poles, Faust and Margarethe, are drawn towards one another. But Faust must first commit perjury with reference to the death of Martha's husband, Mr. Schwertlein. Mephisto's persuasive eloquence finds utterance in the following terms:—

Is this the first time in your life that you  
Have borne false witness? Have you lectured "On  
God," and "On the world"? And "All that moves therein"?  
And "Man"? and on "How thought originates"?  
And that enigma, "Man's mysterious nature"?  
"The intellectual and the moral powers?"  
Have you not dealt in formal definitions  
With forehead unabashed and heart undaunted?  
Yet, if you did but own the truth, your conscience  
Must tell you—does it not?—you know no more  
Of all these matters, than of Schwertlein's death.

When, however, Mephisto tries to include in the above category the protestations of his love for Gretchen, Faust bids him avaunt! and the intensity of eternal love carries all before it. Mephisto is confused. He cannot comprehend this, he can but reply,

Yet, I am in the right.

Here Faust carries off a short victory, which, however, becomes a defeat, by his subsequent voluntary surrender.

I'm tired of talk, you then are in the right  
You must be, sure! I have no help for it.

Now follows the garden scene, the parallels being—

#### MEPHISTO AND MARTHA, FAUST WITH GRETCHEN.

We have a cosy garden enclosed by a wall. A lilac tree in full bloom gives a beautiful fragrance to heighten the pleasure of the place.

We distinguish six distinct phases in the scene.

#### 1ST PHASE.

Gretchen is learning Love's A.B.C. She cannot understand, and yet would like to know, what Faust sees in her, for she fancies herself so simple-minded.

#### 2ND PHASE.

Martha has made up her mind to captivate Mephisto. In an *argumentum ad hominem* she advises him to marry.

In youth's wild days it cannot but be pleasant,  
This idle roaming round and round the world,  
With wild-fire spirits and heart disengaged,  
But soon comes age and sorrow, and to drag

Through the last years of life down to the grave  
 A solitary creature—like the wretch  
 Who moves from prison on to execution,  
 This must be bad for body and for soul.

Mephisto, however, only ridicules her.

You make me shudder at the dreary prospect.

### 3RD PHASE.

Faust and Gretchen re-appear. His likeness is already fixed in her heart ; her soul has gone out towards him. She shows her fear most plainly lest he should go away and forget her. Faust's question,

“ Your time is passed, then, much alone ? ”

gives the motive for her charmingly *naïve* narrative of her household and family. She has a brother—Valentine—who is a soldier, but the little sister whom she brought up is dead. We can read her heart as a book and see into it as into a pellucid lake. Gretchen's character is in this scene most clearly and fully developed for us. In none of his creations has Goethe's muse ascended to such flights as here. It is only by means of this scene that the subsequent one in the dungeon scene can be explained and understood.

### 4TH PHASE.

Not yet converted Martha attacks Mephisto more energetically still : —

Tell me plainly : Have you never met  
 One whom you loved ? Thought you of marriage yet ?

Mephisto does not wish to understand her, and his speeches are so humorous because Martha really puts him into a corner. She would desire nothing more, than to make a second trial of married blessedness with him.

### 5TH PHASE.

Faust is now already the confidant of Gretchen. Confessions follow.

FAUST— And so thou didst, my angel, didst thou not,  
 The moment that I came into the garden,  
 Remember me again, upon this spot ?

She responds—

Did you not see it ? I held down my eyes.

Faust now asks her if she has pardoned his rudeness in addressing her in the manner he did as she came out of church. And here we learn what we have already known :—

Yet must I own, I did not then detect  
 How my heart pleaded for thee, nor suspect  
 I with myself was angry, that with thee  
 As angry as I ought, I could not be.



Faust is already permitted to name her "Sweet love." And now comes the beautiful "He loves me ; he loves me not ; he loves me."

The moment has arrived in which budding love is about to burst forth into bloom.

FAUST— Yes, my child, deem this language of the flower

The answer of an oracle—He loves thee.

Dost thou know all the meaning of: He loves thee?

MARGARETHE— I tremble.

The new born, not-to-be-explained, feeling of her intense love which has suddenly taken possession of her being, makes her, as it were, wish to flee from herself, more than Faust, who now follows her.

#### LAST PHASE.

Martha now retires from the uneven conflict with Mephisto, not on account of being defeated, but because she despairs, lest she should be. When the words "The night is coming on" escapes her, Mephisto feels as if he had got rid of the mill-stone round his neck—"Yes! and we must away." Martha seemingly wraps herself in the mantle of virtue, fearing the evil tongues of her neighbours, and she and her escort go to look for Faust and Gretchen. We look into a small summer-house, an arbor hidden like a nest in the foliage ; and within and without the little feathered friends are flitting to and fro. It is Faust who, holding Gretchen in his arms, imprints passionate kisses upon her lips. It is Gretchen who returns the embrace, and sighing says :—

Dearest and best with my whole heart I love thee.

But before the porch we have the representatives of the sensual element of love—Mephisto and Martha. We thus understand Faust's exclamation "A Brute !" when he catches a glimpse of Mephisto. Margarethe remains behind in ecstasy over the beauty of her lover.

How many things a man like this must know !

and overcome by the consciousness of her own shortcomings, exclaims :—

And I had but a "yes"  
For everything he said, confused  
By every word ; yet he excused  
Each fault of mine. What can it be  
That thus attaches him to me.

On Faust, too, we must play the eavesdropper and listen to his soliloquy. He has fled the city and betaken himself to the solitude of the woods. He hesitates and trembles to destroy Margarethe in his passion. He has everything nature can give him, but he feels also, with bitter pain, that nothing absolutely perfect can fall to the lot of man. He is intoxicated with the desire to satisfy his passion, and still uneasy, even in enjoyment, languishes for desire. At this point it is shown that the compact between Faust and Mephisto can never be fulfilled by the latter—

Would I arrest  
And hail the happy moment in its course  
Bidding it linger with me, then throw me  
Into fetters. Then willingly do I consent to perish.

Faust could only then sink completely to the level of the brute and lose his salvation, if he could really find satisfaction in sensuality. Bodily he can ; he will therefore perish in the body but not in the spirit. Mephistopheles, the demon of sensuality, is forced though desiring Evil to work out Good. He has not yet, however, renounced the hope of victory. He paints Gretchen's sorrow at his (Faust's) departure and tempts him once more to go into her presence to—

Comfort the young monkey,  
And requite the poor thing for her love.

Faust reads his design and calls him—

Serpent, vile serpent.

To which Mephisto replies aside :—

Aye, and one that stings.

Since Faust desired to drain to the dregs the cup of human passions in purely creature-like animal existence, he must now continue in the broad and easy way that leadeth unto perdition.

What must be, be it soon. Let the crash fall  
Down on me of her ruin. Perish all,  
She—I—and these wild thoughts together.

Faust, under the influence of Gretchen's suggestions, learn to abhor his companion and expresses a longing to be freed from his contact. Meanwhile with a foreboding of sorrow Gretchen sits at her spinning wheel singing—

My peace is gone, my heart is sore,  
I've lost him, and lost him for evermore !  
The place where he is not to me is the tomb,  
The world is sadness and sorrow and gloom.

My poor sick brain is crazed with pain,  
And my poor sick heart is torn in twain,  
My peace is gone, and my heart is sore  
For lost is my love for evermore.

From the windows for him my heavy eyes roam  
To seek him, all lonely, I wander from home,  
His noble form, his bearing high,  
The smiles of his lip, and the power of his eye,

And the magic tone of that voice of his  
His hand's soft pressure, and oh ! his kiss.  
My peace is gone, my heart is sore,  
I have lost him, and lost for evermore.

Far wanders my heart to feel him near.  
Oh ! could I clasp him, and hold him here !  
Hold him and kiss him, Oh ! could I die !  
To feed on his kisses, how willingly.



Scarcely has she ended, when Mephisto re-appears, but Gretchen, shuddering at the very sight of him, flies into her lover's arms. There is a pause, as slyly, shyly, she commences, "Promise me, Henry," and expresses her doubt concerning the religious opinions of her lover. She fears that his Christianity is not very deep, as also, his views on the sacredness of the marriage rite, which according to the Christian Catholic Church is classed among the sacraments. Faust does not know how to get out of the difficulty of answering her, when Gretchen going a step too far, helps him by enquiring if he believes in God. Now follows that splendid confession of a Pantheist :—

MARGARETHE.—Do you believe in God ?

FAUST.—Forbear, my love,

Who can truly say, I believe in God ?  
Ask it of priest or of philosopher,  
And the reply seems but a mockery of him  
Who asks—

MARGARETHE.—"Then thou dost not believe?"

FAUST.—Misunderstand me not, thou best beloved.

Who can name Him and knowing what He says,  
Say : I believe in Him ? And who can feel,  
And with self-violence to conscious wrong,  
Hardening his heart, say : I believe Him not,  
The all-embracing, all-sustaining One ?  
Say : Doth He not embrace, sustain, include  
Thee ? Me ? Himself ? Bends not the sky  
Above ? And the earth on which we are, is it  
Not firm ? And over us with constant  
Kindly smile, the sleepless stars  
Keep everlasting watch ? Am I not here  
Gazing into thine eyes ? And does not  
All that is, seen and unseen, mysterious all,  
Around thee and within, untiring agency,  
Press on thy heart and mine.  
Fill thy whole heart with it and when thou art  
Lost in the consciousness of happiness, then  
Call it what thou wilt, happiness, heart,  
Love, God—I have no name for it. Feeling  
Is all. Name—sound and smoke dimming  
The glow of heaven.

Gretchen replies :—

This is all good and right, the priest says  
Pretty much the same, but in words somewhat different.

"All hearts," says Faust, "in all places, under the blessed light of day, say it ; each in its own language ; why not I in mine."

To whom Gretchen—

Yet there is something strange about thy Christianity.

She reproaches him with the evil company he keeps, alluding to Mephisto. In his (Mephisto's) presence she almost feels her own love vanishing, certain it is she

cannot pray. The guileless innocence which prattles thus, prepares us for the *naïve* readiness with which she is willing to admit her lover into her apartment—

This very night,  
How gladly would I leave the door unbolted,  
But then my mother's sleep is far from sound.

She consents to give her mother a sleeping draught, which under diabolical influence acts like poison. Thus she parts from the man she loves.

*Sieh' ich dich bester Mann nur an  
Weiss nicht was mich nach deinem Willen treibt  
Ich habe schon so viel für Dich gethan  
Dass mir zu thun fast nichts mehr übrig bleibt*

This scene is followed with terrible significance, by that brief one at the well, where Margarethe hears her friends triumph over the fall of her companions. Women, in all other circumstances so compassionate, are merciless to each other precisely in those situations where feminine sympathy would be most grateful, where feminine tenderness should be most suggestive. Bessy, the friend, lets all her wrath fall on the victim, but Gretchen, taught compassion by experience, cannot now triumph as formerly she would have done, now that she too is a sinner and cannot chide. The closing words of this soliloquy have never been adequately translated. There is something in their simplicity and intensity which defies translation :—

*Doch alles was dazu mich trieb  
Gott war so gut ! ach war so lieb !*

Margarethe is now depicted praying to the Mater Dolorosa to hide her shame and rescue her from death.

Mother benign !  
Look down on me !  
No grief like thine,  
Thou who did'st see  
In his death agony  
Thy son divine.

Oh ! in this hour of death and the near grave  
Succour me, thou, and save,  
Look on me, with that countenance benign,  
Never was grief like thine !  
Look down ! Look down on mine.

Her shame becomes public. Her brother, Valentine, finds Faust under her window with Mephistopheles serenading her. A fight ensues. Valentine receives a mortal wound and dies, reproaching his guilty sister as the cause of his death. Valentine is the representative of family honour and civic order. The catastrophe is heightened by his death. He is a brave young soldier, his only pride his beautiful young sister, whom he was accustomed to praise before all his comrades. He thus becomes the incarnation of family egotism, loving himself as part of his own family, which egotism is evidently in the wrong and which he seals with his death. He is caused to appear, in the great tragedy of the passions, to be a hero of the smaller tragedy in middle-class life. The poor fellow whilst dying utters vehement



reproaches against Martha. The tragic reconciliation between brother and sister being the consciousness of the dying man that—

Fearless, I go, as fits the brave,  
To God, and to a soldier's grave.

From this scene of bloodshed and horror we are led to the Cathedral. The organ peals forth, and Gretchen enters followed by Martha. Gretchen prays among the crowd, the evil spirit at her side. The ritual, the solemn tones of the organ, the *dies irae, dies illa* awake Gretchen's conscience, which visibly, as her evil spirit, is sitting beside her. Conscience is the voice of the heart, the surest index of right and wrong. So here the awakening of conscience is the first footstep in the act of repentance. The evil spirit then tells us that the sleeping draught administered to the mother has caused her death, and Gretchen finds herself in the greatest despair. She is overpowered by remorse, for the Evil One interprets the words of the hymn in their most appalling significance.

I omit the *Walpurgisnacht* for although a splendid episode, it has not of a necessity any bearing on the main plot of the poem.

The scene is in Hartz Mountains, where the witches are holding their sabbath. On reaching the place of meeting Faust and Mephisto find, beside witches and wizards, representative characters moralizing on the degeneracy of the age; and amongst many strange objects, Faust has a foreboding vision of the fate of his beloved. No description can carry more than a very faint notion of the *Intermezzo* supposed to be performed by a *dilettante* company on the Blocksberg, the *dramatis personæ* being a motly crew, with each a couplet or two assigned to them; the point of which (when there is a point) can only be made intelligible by notes.

I would wish to draw attention to the fact how cleverly the poet contrasts his scenes. Immediately after the solemn cathedral rites, we have the diabolical, the wizard-like element of the Blockberg.

Now we approach the denouement of the tragedy.

Seduction has led to infanticide, the murder to the condemnation of the mother. This Faust learns from Mephisto. We are then taken to the portal of a dungeon. Faust approaches with a key and a lamp. The song in which Gretchen's evil spirit finds utterance is the contents of an old legend, in which a wretched mother destroys her child, cooks it and places it as a meal before her husband. The little sister of the murdered one collects the bones and buries them under a tree. The bones are transformed into a bird which sings from a tree in front of the house, when, the wretched mother approaching, she is killed by a stone which the bird lets drop—

My mother, my mother, my mother hath slain me,  
My father inhuman, for supper hath ta'en me,  
My little sister hath, one by one,  
Laid together each small white bone  
Mid almond blossoms to sleep in the cool,  
And I awake me, a wood-bird beautiful.  
Fly away! fly away! all the long summer day,  
Little bird of the woods, fly away! fly away!

Her delirium has transformed her own murdered babe into a bird. She fancies she hears it singing, and she repeats incessantly the words of the song, "Fly away! Fly away!" Faust enters. Gretchen imagines it is the gaoler come to lead her

to the scaffold. The two-fold "Woe! Woe!" is the exclamation of a creature overcome by fear of death, which ends in the words, "they come," and in the sad resignation, "Bitter death." Her brain is shaken, but she is not mad. Every word she utters is a horrible truth. Then she appeals to this man, whom she mistakes for the hangman—and this is the, to her unknown, Faust—for pity, for mercy. She is beside herself that she is to die at such an early hour, it not being daylight—

It is not more than midnight now, have mercy.  
It is too long a time to wait till morn?

Her sorrow, that she is still so youthful, is intensely real, the wail from the depth of her heart, and like every criminal she tries to excuse her crime.

And I am still so young—so very young,  
And must I die so soon? And I was fair,  
And I was fair and that was my undoing,  
"Oh! if my love were here, but he is gone!"

Her fear of death increases when Faust takes hold of her.

Savage! who gave this cruel power to thee?

It must be remembered that she mistakes him for the hangman, hence her tone of address. Overcome by fear of death, her imagination leads her to fancy that the child which in spirit she nursed during the night, still lives; for its having become a little forest bird is only a legend among the people, who say it applies to her. In Faust, who is now kneeling beside her, she perceives merely a being with whom she can pray, and thus soothe the pains of hell with which her conscience is troubled.

Let us kneel down, and call upon the saints.  
See! see! beneath us, hell boils up  
The Devil is raging there below  
In hideous din."

Only when Faust calls her by name does she seem to have an idea of his presence; she listens, as if he, so near, were at a distance. Now she springs from her bed of straw, her chains fall; her words explain themselves. Faust's "'Tis I," is immediately responded to, "'Tis thou?" But as if in doubt she begs: "Oh say it once again." Then completely overcome with joy, she loses herself in the once happy past. All fear, all horror of the present pass away; he only, her lover, fills her soul. But the Faust, counselling flight, is no longer her happy, loving Faust. The night of her misfortune again breaks on her. The remembrance of the horrid deed which has happened again becomes vivid, and in an awful monotone she commences: "My mother I poisoned!" and, increasing in horror and intensity. "My child I drowned!" Trembling, fearing, her crime appears doubly great, But her lover carries a heavy burden of guilt. He is the murderer of her brother, and as if awakening suddenly, to the full comprehension of the awful deed, she shrieks, "Oh God, what hast thou done!" Faust's reply makes it evident that he has been found guilty, but he is to live to look after the grave and her own burial. Commencing with the words, "Nay you must stay" down to the sad, hopeless exclamation—

No one will otherwise be by my side.



every word breathes forth an intensely sorrowful, sad request. It is the last demand on earth—

No, you must live. No, you have to remain.  
I will describe to you the graves which you  
To-morrow must see made : The best place  
Give to my poor mother ;  
Near her lay my brother,  
And by their side a little space away,  
But not too far from them, must be my place  
And lay the little one on my right breast,  
No other will lie with me in that grave,  
To nestle down in quiet, side by side  
With thee, Oh what a happy thing it was !  
A happy thing, that never more can be !

She declines to flee with Faust, preferring to wash out her sin by death. There is, therefore, a heartfelt sorrow contained in the words : "Oh Henry! could I only go with thee!" but she cannot escape her fate; for if she were to flee, her evil conscience would be the cause of her being re-arrested.

I dare not go, there is no help for me.  
What good is it to fly. My steps are watched.  
It is a hard thing to be forced to beg,  
And harder, harassed by an evil conscience.  
'Tis hard to wander in a foreign land ;  
And then, whate'er I do, at last they'll seize me.

Faust promises to remain with her, but she exclaims, "Can you undo what is already done?" This question makes her brain whirl, her memory returns to the last moments of a poisoned, dying mother and a drowned infant. Her paroxysm ends in the cry, "Save! Save!" Faust now desires to carry her away by force, she will not permit it. Her consciousness has returned once more, and with fearful certainty she exclaims :—

Yes, it is growing day ; the last day is breaking,  
My bridal it should have been. Tell none  
That thou hast been with poor weak Margarethe,  
Alas my garland is already withered.—  
We'll meet again, but not at dances, love !  
The crowd is gathering tumultuously.  
The square and street are thronged with crushing thousands.  
The bell hath sounded, the death wand is broken.  
They bind and blindfold me, and force me on,  
On to the scaffold they have hurried me.  
And now through every neck of all that multitude  
Is felt the bitter wound that severs mine  
The world is now as silent as the grave !—

As previously the just closed past appeared to her excited imagination as the present, so the immediate future is now pictured to her as the present. Here her work is ended. Her physical death is only, as it were, the fullstop of the sentence—only the symbol of the consummation of earthly existence. Mephisto appears at the door. Margarethe recognizes the Evil One. "'Tis he! 'Tis he; send him from this place!" she exclaims. "What would he here? Why does he tread on con-

secrated ground?" With the words, "He comes for me," she shudders from the demon of sin and sensuality. Falling on her knees she resigns herself to the judgment of God. The absolution is complete.

MEPHISTO— Come, she is judged.  
A VOICE (from above)— Is saved.

The last words from Mephisto to Faust, "Hither to me," need no elucidation, and with them the tragedy ends, a voice from within dying away uttering the words, "Henry, Henry."

The earthly Faust is lost, the spiritual one, however, is saved, in the same manner as his earthly love is lost as represented in Margarethe, in order to be crowned by an eternal, heavenly one, which by its powers shall free him from the trammels of sin.

The amount of controversy these last few lines have occasioned, seems scarcely credible. The most poetical interpretation being, I take it, says Mr. Howard, that Gretchen dies after uttering the last words assigned to her; that the judgment of heaven is pronounced upon her as her spirit parts (Mephisto announces it in his usual sardonic and deceitful style); that the voice from above makes known the real purport, and that the voice from within, dying away, is Margarethe's spirit calling to her lover on its way to heaven, whilst her body lies dead on the stage.

Schlegel in a letter to Martin says: "*Sie ist gerichtet*" se rapporte à la sentence de mort, prononcée par les juges, les mots suivants "*Sie ist gerettet*", au salut de son âme. It has been contended that the *Sie ist gerichtet* refers both to the judgment in heaven and to the judgment upon earth. As to the translation of the passage no doubt can well exist, for *richten* is literally to judge and is constantly used in the precise sense the above interpretation attributes to it; for instance, *Zu richten die Lebendigen und die Todten*, to judge the quick and the dead.

With what words shall one sum up this wonderfully beautiful poem. Regarding the translations of the noble work I expressed my opinion at the outset. Even in the original the effect depends so much on the language, that it must be read and re-read, to be appreciated. Its glory soon dawns upon the student. It is now one of those works which exercise a fascination, to be compared only to the minute and inexhaustible love we feel for those long dear to us, every expression having a peculiar and, by association, quite mystic influence.

With peculiar reference to his universality, Goethe has been called the Voltaire of Germany. But the comparison is unjust to him. His genius was of a higher order, and he bears to German literature, as a whole, the same relation which Voltaire bears to the French of the 18th Century. In the opening lecture of a remarkable series at the University of Berlin, it was stated boldly and unequivocally, "Goethe has created our language and our speech. Before him both were without value in the world-mart of the nations of Europe."

Madame De Staël said of him that he might represent the entire literature of his country. Not that there are not other writers, superior to him in some respects, but that alone he represents all that distinguishes the German mind and no one is so remarkable for a kind of imagination to which neither Italians, French, nor English can lay claim. In Germany the admiration for Goethe is a kind of freemasonry. At the Shakespeare Tercentenary at Stratford a German gentleman, speaking for a deputation, rose and said that "he and his friends had come to do honour to the



second greatest poet that ever lived"—Goethe being the first. He was not like his own Tasso the silk worm, self-producing from within; he drew his inspiration from without, from the acting, feeling, thinking, suffering world around him.

As a drama, the first impression, perhaps inevitable, is unfavourable to Faust—for reasons previously stated. The scenes hang loosely together and unity of action is altogether wanting. As a poem we must distinguish the picture from the problem. We must come to the conclusion that it is the cry of despair over the nothingness of life. Baffled in the attempt to penetrate the mysteries of life, Faust yields himself to the Tempter, who promises that he shall penetrate into the full enjoyment of life. He is restless, because he seeks the absolute, which never can be found. This is the doom of humanity. *Es irrt der Mensch so lang er strebt.* Goethe tried as near as possible to solve the problem practically and theoretically by his doctrine of renunciation and the example of his life.

Knowledge can be only relative, never absolute. But this relative knowledge is infinite and to us infinitely important. In that wide sphere let each one work according to his ability. The sphere of active duty is wide, sufficing, ennobling to all who strenuously work in it. In the very sweat of labour there is a stimulus which gives energy to life and a consciousness that our labour tends in some way to the lasting benefit of others and makes the rolling years endurable.

If you wish for deeper knowledge  
     Think for yourself!  
 Let the wide world be your college  
     Think for yourself!  
 In a college so extensive,  
 Knowledge may be comprehensive,  
 Without being made expensive,  
     Think for yourself!





# MOLIÈRE.

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A Study on the Rise and Progress of French Comedy.

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# MOLIÈRE.

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## A Study on the Rise and Progress of French Comedy.

IN the front rank, amongst the great writers who by their masterpieces inaugurated the reign of Louis XIV. we find Molière. There is, perhaps, no author in this fruitful and distinguished age who has obtained a higher reputation than he, or who has more nearly reached the summit of perfection in his own art. There is in Molière's character a deep tone of passion and earnestness of feeling which raises him far above the ordinary English notion of French frivolity. In the reign of him who said: *L'état c'est moi*, Molière enjoyed unusual freedom. The position in which he stood with the King is sufficiently evident by the gift of a canonry which he obtained from him for the son of his doctor. It is of him that Voltaire recounts the following: Dining, one day, with the King, "You have a doctor," said Louis XIV. to Molière, "what does he do for you?" "Sire," replied Molière, "we chat; he prescribes certain remedies; I do not take the medicine, and I get well." Born of the *bourgeoisie*, he does not spare to attack their follies; obliged to mix with the aristocracy he is pitiless towards their vices and pretensions. He may be said to have fully realized the motto: *Castigat ridendo mores*—correcting humanity by laughing at its defects. He is neither sublime nor *scandaleux*. He makes us reflect; he makes us laugh. Reflection is good, if it leads to amendment, and hygienic laws are in favour of a hearty laugh as a healthful exercise. A profound moralist, he is far from being an immoral poet, and Thompson could well say of him

"Molière's scene  
Chastis'd and regular, with well-judged art,  
Not scattered wild, with native humour grac'd  
Was life itself."—

In order the better to understand the enormous advance of Molière's creations on anything that had preceded him, it will be advisable to glance at the origin of the mediæval theatre in general and comedy in particular.

Amongst the inheritances from paganism, Christianity received the theatre steeped in all the vices of those licentious and lascivious times. The gravity and nobility of the ancients had long since disappeared. The good, the pure, the noble had given place to all that was vile, base and debauched. No wonder, therefore, that the early church fathers were most eloquent in their invectives against the theatre. Their vehemence was ceaseless in pursuing this criminal institution. They called the stage "the sanctuary of Venus, the cavern of the Devil, the public factory for crimes, a school of infamy." Gregory, Tertullian, the Councils, all repeat the same anathemas. Under these repeated blows the theatre fell. Strange to relate, however, the theatre, ruined by the Church, reappeared under its patronage. It was metamorphosed, but it saw the light again, after having been buried for a long time.

A few Christian imitations of the ancient stage, Latin rhetorical exercises, the earliest attempts at dramatic representation fostered by the Abbess of Gandersheim indicated the route to be followed. One had, however, to wait for years ere the people took delight in pleasures less grave than those with which it at first whiled away its leisure hours. The first ray of literary joy came to it from the cathedrals and the churches. The gorgeous ritual of the Church, the processions, the banners, the robed choristers and incense bearers, this, in itself was a performance, the splendour of which was undoubted. Early in the history of the Church dramatic performances were introduced. Thus, we are told, on Ascension day, a priest mounted a flight of steps on the outside of Notre-Dame, simulating Christ's ascent into heaven. At Pentecost, one saw the Holy Ghost descending from the roof of the cathedral in the shape of a dove with the accompaniment of tongues of fire. 'Tis but a step from this to the mysteries.

The mysteries represented on the stage the most remarkable events of sacred history. The narratives most frequently dramatized for the benefit of the public were: The life and death of Jesus Christ; the history of the Virgin; of the Saints; of Adam; of the patriarchs. It is not necessary to examine in details the development of this religious drama, suffice it to say, that it was produced by a natural sequence from the elaborate cult of the Romish Church, in the same manner as the theatre was born amongst the Athenians from the worship of Bacchus. This theatre, which already existed in the eleventh century, remained for two hundred years under the control of the clergy. In the thirteenth century lay poets commenced to compose dramatic works in the same style, and the clergy abandoned the representations to the laymen.

When a town wished to give a spectacular display of this description, the chief citizens came together with the sanction of the aldermen, of the chapter, and of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, erected a wooden theatre in the public square, had decorations and costumes made, and engaged actors. The representation was preceded by a *monstre*, or a procession of all the actors in the cast, and by a *cry public* (a proclamation) in verse, inviting the people to be present at the performance of the mystery.

Side by side with these religious representations were some that were more profane. On the occasion of certain popular feasts, farces were performed which were really dramatized *contes* or *fabliaux*. On certain solemn occasions, such as the coronation of a sovereign, or the marriage of one of the members of the royal family, there were given *representations mimiques* called *entremets*, kinds of intermezzos, where the most divers subjects were placed before the people. These *tableaux* continued until the reign of Henry II. (1547).

In the north of France the representations given by musical and literary societies under the name of *Puys*, were of a more elevated character. Such is for instance the *Pastorale de Robin et Marion*, written by Adam de la Halle towards the end of the thirteenth century. The pieces played by the *Puys* were sometimes of an allegorical character, as may be frequently seen from their titles. The moralities may have drawn their origin from this source.

The commencement of the fifteenth Century is an epoch in the history of the stage. In 1402 a society of citizens of Paris received from Charles VI. the privilege:

"*De faire jouer quelque mystère que ce soit, soit de la Passion et Resurrection ou autre quelconque tant de saints comme de saintes qu'ils voudront eslire mettre sus (i.e. sur la scène) toutes et quantes fois qu'il leur plaira.*"



With the Confrérie de la Passion, Paris received its first theatre established in the Hospital de la Trinité, close to the Porte Saint Denis. Soon after, two new companies started, viz., the Clercs de la Basoche and the Enfants Sans Souci. The Clercs de la Basoche or Clercs du Parlement has received a kind of charter of incorporation since the reign of Philip the Fair (1292). He had given them privileges, statutes, and a special jurisdiction. In the twenties of the fifteenth century they obtained permission to play, be it at the houses of private persons, be it on certain specified days, in their own theatre du Châtelet, particular pieces of an allegorical character which received the name of *moralités*. These were performed side by side with the farces.

About the same time, at a date that cannot now be fixed exactly, some youths of good family also obtained the privilege of playing pieces called *soties*. These youths formed a company under the name of: "Société des Enfants Sans Souci." They played in the "Halles." These two societies long maintained a friendly rivalry. On the other hand the Confrères de la Passion made a contract with the Enfants Sans Souci, by virtue of which, the latter were allowed to perform their *soties* in the theatre in Trinity Hospital and furnished, later on, the actors for the comic "business" that was introduced into the mysteries.

Such was the organization of the regular theatre, in Paris, during the Middle Ages. The provinces followed the example of the capital. All the large towns formed societies for the representation of mysteries. Angers, Bourges, Metz, Orleans, Poitiers, Rouen, Saumur, Tours and Troyes particularly distinguished themselves by the splendour of their performances. The fifteenth century is the great epoch in the French theatre. Mysteries, moralities, farces, take a wider scope; the *soties* are of a special character.

Mysteries were of three kinds: (1) Mysteries properly so-called, which represent "*par personnages*" a story either of the Old or New Testament; (2) Miracles, which represent some marvellous saintly adventure - in the provinces the saints were those of local celebrity; (3) Profane mysteries, which represented historical or legendary events without any religious admixture.

The moralities were at first but simple moral allegories dramatized. Afterwards come moralities which were rather dramatized parables, such as; "The Prodigal Son." Lastly, the moralities which particularly depict a moral quality, a certain virtue: "*Moralité ou histoire rommaine d'une femme qui avait voulu trahir la cité de Rome et comme sa fille la nourrit six semaines de son lait en prison; à cinq personnages, c'est assavoir: Oracius, Valerius, le sergent, la mère et la fille.*"

The *sotie*, which seems the most recent form of the drama of the Middle Ages, has a satirical tendency. It is an attempt at political comedy, recalling at times Aristophanes. From the second half of the fifteenth century, moralities, *soties*, farces, became the objects of the suspicious attention of the Government. Under Charles VII. an attempt was made to put a check on the growing audacity of the Clercs de la Basoche and of the Enfants Sans Souci. Under the harsh rule of Louis XI. they were compelled to be silent or nearly so, but which Louis XII. liberty raised her head once more. This prince *permit les théâtres libres et voulut que sur iceux on jouât librement les abus qui se commettaient tant en sa cour comme en tout son royaume, pensant par là apprendre et savoir beaucoup de choses lesquelles autrement il lui était impossible d'entendre.* He, even, made use of the theatre as a potent arm in his strife with the Papacy. Under Francis I. persecutions recommenced and the liberty of the theatre was restrained by royal decrees. Hence during the sixteenth century the theatre languished. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the



Clercs de la Basoche and the Enfants Sans Souci have ceased to perform. The company of the Clercs du Parlement, however, lasted until the Revolution, which put an end to it, as it did to so many other institutions.

In 1548 the confrères who had established themselves at the Hotel de Bourgogne having asked for a confirmation of their privileges, Parliament allowed them to play, *sujets profanes honnestes et licites*, but forbade them, expressly, mysteries drawn from Holy Writ. This enactment sounded the death-knell of the old religious theatre. Four years later Jodelle founded the modern theatre. His creation did not, however, carry off the victory *ab initio*. The profane mysteries perpetuated the tradition of the Middle Ages. The exclusive privilege enjoyed by the Frères de la Passion prevented the training of actors capable of interpreting the new art, and the school of Jodelle was obliged to have its tragedies and comedies played by collegians or gentlemen at Court. Thus the brotherhood put an obstacle in the way of the progress of the more learned art. In the end the force of circumstances, however, obliged the confrérie to make common cause with the new school, and towards 1588 they leased their rights and their hall to a troop of comedians, who, thanks to the reign of Henry IV. and to the return of peace, could regularly play comedy and tragedy. Religious mysteries were, however, only forbidden in Paris. They continued in the provinces, but soon eclipsed by the splendour of the new theatre of the seventeenth century, they withdrew to the country-side where some of them even still linger.

As for French comedy, notwithstanding the imitations of and translations from Aristophanes, Plautus and Terence, it is neither Greek nor Latin. It is the outcome of the farce of the Middle Ages and of Italian comedy. All the attacks of Jodelle, Grevin de la Taille, and others notwithstanding they borrow from the mediæval farce many of the subjects whilst giving to the action more development and greater amplitude. Besides, the farce contained the germ of the comedy, and there is nothing surprising that the former gave birth to the latter. Too often, however, up to Corneille's *Mélite*, comedy, by its licence, but too plainly betrays its origin. On the other hand, during the sixteenth century, Italian comedy was the model frequently resorted to. The *Suppositi* of Ariosto, the *Calandria* of Bibbiena, and many others, found, under a French dress, a home under a more northern sky. The first classic comedy *Eugène* was played before the Court in 1552. Jodelle, in his prologue, propounds the theories of the new school. "No more farces, no more moralities with their *fratras*; there is to be something new, something which modelled without servility upon the ancients shall yet be modern." *Rien d'étrange on ne vous fait entendre.*

In 1567 Baïf gave his *Brave ou Taille bras* founded on the original Latin of Plautus, but modernized and frenchified. The piece played with care, accompanied by choruses composed by Ronsard, Desportes, Filleul and Belleau, had a gréat success. With Baïf ends what one may call the first period of the sixteenth century comedy, viz., that of the contemporaries of Jodelle and of the Pléiade. After this generous effort of the school the progress of comedy was but slow in the second half of the sixteenth century. Italian influence reigned supreme, to give place in turn, to Spanish influence. Catherine, the wife of him who was to become Henry II., arriving in France 1533 imported Italian manners to Court. But, notwithstanding the invasion of a new taste, of a strange vocabulary and other innovations, a good comic language and an attempt at French prose was formed in this second period spoken of. The pieces of the Pléiade, like the farces from which they are derived, are in eight syllabic verse. Then comedies imitated from the Italian arose. In



Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, comic authors, even the most distinguished poets, thought it necessary to write comedies in prose. Ariosto had written *Cassaria* and the *Suppositi* in prose and only later rewrote them in verse. The Cardinal Bibbiena, Piccolomini, Arétin, Dolce, Lorenzino de Médicis, Grazzini all wrote in prose.

We now come to a remarkable writer who deserves special mention in the history of comedy in the sixteenth century. Pierre Larivey was of Italian origin of the family of the Giunti, hence his name—*l'arrivé*—somewhat hidden under the peculiar orthography adopted. He translated contemporary Italian authors with fidelity and originality, but, in giving them in French he re-arranged them; dressed them *à la française*, changed the scene of action, altered the names, suppressed scenes and rôles when unsuited to the French stage, added here and there a few touches the better to mark the characters, retouched everything which gave the work its proper tone, personages, manners, local colouring; and he did this with such faithfulness, such discernment, that his translations are almost always superior to the original. As for his style, it is almost perfect; his language is full of proverbial and popular phrases and of an elegance quite rare amongst his contemporaries.

Larivey wrote twelve plays of which we have still nine. The rigorists of his time censured the theatre as a school of licence and corruption. Larivey replying to them says:—

La comédie estant le miroir de nostre vie les vieillards apprennent à se garder de ce qui parait ridicule en un homme d'âge; les jeunes à se gouverner en amour; les dames à conserver leur honnesteté; les pères et mères de famille à soigner aux affaires de leur ménage. Bref si les autres spectacles sont propres à la jeunesse celui-ci d'électe, enseigne et est propre aux jeunes, aux vieux et à un chacun.

Towards the end of the century, the comic drama was dragging along a miserable existence and it required a wait of thirty years before it burst forth again, but this time with a splendour and vigour which put it *hors de concours*. It was when with Henry IV. the new order was inaugurated, that the new school of Hardy appeared. Hardy had a most fertile pen. He composed or arranged six hundred, others say, eight hundred plays. As for the famous theory of the unities, so rigorously observed in the seventeenth century, the time and place portions of it were more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

Hardy was soon surpassed by his contemporaries. He died in 1630 and his reputation with him. He had seen the *Mélite* of Corneille and found it "*une assez jolie farce*." This *improvisateur* had, however, to disappear in order that the theatre should be disciplined and accept the yoke of Ariosto, in a like manner as France was about to accept that of Richelieu.

Of all French comedy writers Molière stands out as a classic. "Who is the man of greatest genius in France?" asked the king of the great critic Boileau. "Molière, Sire." Louis XIV. was surprized, though it was his favourite actor, the comedian to whom he was so indulgent and patronizingly kind, who was in question. "I don't think so," said the king; "but you know that kind of thing better than I do." The more we know of Molière's career and the more we scan the peculiar character of the man, the greater our admiration of his genius, and our appreciation of his human qualities. He could truly say:

*Homo sum nihil humani a me alienum puto.*

One day Biron—an actor brought up and trained by Molière—told him that a strolling player, whose poverty prevented him presenting himself, begged some assistance, in order to be able to regain his troupe. Molière, knowing that the man's name was Mondorge, an old comrade, asked Biron how much he thought he ought to give. "Four pistoles," the latter replied. "Give him four pistoles from me and there are twenty more that *you* must give him." To this present he added that of a magnificent coat. Another trait, also recounted by Voltaire, is worthy of note. He had just given alms to a beggar. A moment afterwards, the mendicant runs after him and says: "Sire, it was perhaps not your intention to give me a louis d'or. I have come to give it back to you." "Here, my friend," said Molière, "here is another, one," and exclaimed:

Où la vertu va-t-elle se nicher ?

These are but trifles, but they portray the man. He is the least merely French of all French writers. He is undoubtedly of the French a Frenchman, yet so human, so modern whilst yet so ancient, so true, so lasting. He belongs to all countries and to all time. He failings—and it would be idle to deny that he had none—becomes also striking evidences of truth and proofs of sincerity. That which proves the power of his genius is his gift of creating whilst imitating, and it may be said of him with perfect truth:

*Nihil quod tetigit non ornavit*

since he stamped everything with the seal of his genius. Molière himself said, *Je reprends mon bien où je le trouve*, but he might also have said with La Fontaine, *Mon imitation n'est point un esclavage*. There is a work of Desmarets de Saint Sortin (*Les Visionnaires*) which would have been entirely forgotten had it not been that Molière drew therefrom his character of *Bélise* for the *Femmes savantes* and taken over the following four lines *in toto*.

The imitation is striking. Here are the lines of Desmarets:

FILIDAN.—Beauté, si tu pouvais savoir tous mes travaux.

AMIDOR.—Siècle, si tu pouvais savoir ce que je vaux.

FILIDAN.—J'aurais en son amour une place authentique.

AMIDOR.—J'aurais une statue en la place publique.

Molière runs as follows:

TRISSOTIN.—Si la France pouvait connaître votre prix.

VADIUS.—Si le siècle rendait justice aux beaux esprits.

TRISSOTIN.—En carosse doré vous iriez par les rues.

VADIUS.—On verrait le public vous dresser des statues.

Molière is certainly more clever and not less natural in making Tressotin praise Vadius and the latter the former, rather than following the original and letting each man sound his own trumpet, which is crude and savours of the tyro. Our poet took two splendid scenes from *Cyrano de Bergerac*, a most strange man, whom his contemporaries wished to pass off as a man of genius. Scarron would be all but forgotten had he not bequeathed us the *Roman Comique* and the *Nouvelles*, which will always be read with interest. One of the finest scenes in *Tartufe* is borrowed from *Les Hypocrites* and the heroine of the *Precaution Inutile* has furnished some traits for the naïve figure of *Agnes*.



Corneille and Racine were almost perfect within the limits they prescribed for themselves. The former expressed the sublimity of heroism, and the latter in language of unequalled beauty the natural emotions of the heart. These two great geniuses are types of purely French literature, while Molière's dramas, like those of Shakespeare, belong to all nations and all ages. The eternal attraction of Molière's pieces is that the author never shows himself, we only see his characters and in his characters humanity. As Boileau says, he instructs without wounding us, and if, by accident, we recognize ourselves in one of his characters, we may profit tacitly by the lesson.

Let us allow Molière to speak on the difficulties and on the morality of the art in which he excelled. It is, no doubt, his own opinion put into the mouth of *Dorante*.

Je trouve qu'il est bien plus aisé de se guinder sur de grands sentiments, de braver en vers la fortune, accuser les destins et dire des injures aux dieux que d'entrer comme il faut dans les ridicules des hommes et de rendre agréablement sur le théâtre les défauts de tout le monde. Lorsque vous peignez des héros vous faites ce que vous voulez ; ce sont des portraits à plaisir, où l'on ne cherche point de ressemblance et vous n'avez qu'à suivre les traits d'une imagination qui se donne l'essor et qui souvent laisse le vrai pour attraper le merveilleux. Mais lorsque vous peignez des hommes, il faut peindre d'après nature ; on veut que ces portraits ressemblent et vous n'avez rien fait si vous n'y faites reconnaître les gens de votre siècle. En un mot, dans les pièces sérieuses, il suffit, pour n'être point blâmé de dire des choses qui soient de bon sens et bien écrites, mais ce n'est pas assez dans les autres ; il y faut plaisanter et c'est une étrange entreprise que celle de faire rire les honnêtes gens. (Critique de l'école des femmes.)

Molière has succeeded admirably in this *étrange entreprise*. He has made honest folks laugh right heartily, troubling himself but little about the sour looks of the other portion of the community. To those who would proscribe comedy, he says :

Je sais qu'il y a des esprits dont la délicatesse ne peut souffrir aucune comédie, qui disent que les plus honnêtes sont les plus dangereuses que les passions que l'on y dépeint sont d'autant plus touchantes qu'elles sont pleines de vertu et que les âmes sont attendries par ces sortes de représentations. Je ne sais pas quel grand crime c'est d'attendrir à la vue d'une passion honnête et c'est un haut étage de vertu que cette pleine insensibilité où ils veulent faire montrer notre âme. Je doute qu'une si grande perfection soit dans les forces de la nature humaine et je ne sais pas s'il n'est pas mieux de travailler à rectifier et à adoucir les passions des hommes que de vouloir les retrancher entièrement. J'avoue qu'il y a des lieux qu'il vaut mieux fréquenter que le théâtre et si l'on veut blâmer toutes les choses qui ne regardent directement Dieu et notre salut il est certain que la comédie en doit être et je ne trouve pas mauvais qu'elle soit condamnée avec le reste, mais supposé, comme il est vrai que les exercices de la piété souffrent des intervalles et que les hommes aient besoin de divertissement, je soutiens que l'on ne leur en peut trouver un qui soit plus innocent que la comédie.

Before speaking thus, Molière has, however, been careful to distinguish between comedy and comedy, and it would be, as he says : "*Une injustice épouvantable que de vouloir condamner Olympe qui est femme de bien par ce qu'il y a une Olympe qui a été une débauchée.*"

Molière's father was carpet furnisher to Louis XIV. Jean Baptiste Poquelin—Molière's real name—was born in 1622, and was destined to succeed in his father's business. His young days were passed in his father's shop, where he had the advantage of studying the habits and manners of the working and shopkeeping classes. At a subsequent period, when in the service of the King, he had an opportunity of narrowly observing the life of the Court. His paternal grandfather

was very fond of playgoing and afterwards took his grandson to the theatre of the Hotel de Bourgogne, where Corneille's plays were being acted. From this old man the youth, probably, inherited his taste for the drama, and it was owing to him that his genius took its true bent so early. The theatre awakened in him a thirst for knowledge and a love for intellectual culture, and, in 1637, he expressed an earnest desire for a liberal education. Four years afterwards, on leaving college, he entered the service of the King as *valet-de-chambre-tapissier*. In those times Richelieu had given an impetus to art. He patronised the theatre, wrote pieces himself and bestowed dignities and wealth on the exponents of the drama. Acting then became the rage, knots of young men and woman formed themselves into companies of actors and Molière was led to associate himself with a few friends in getting up plays. He became enamoured of the theatre and when the private company resolved to become a public one and to derive profit from their performances, he continued his connection with it and, according to the fashion of the time, assumed a new name—Molière. Italian humour gave him a taste for comic situations, but this was not his only source of instruction. The bustle and intrigue of the Spanish comedies had been introduced by Corneille, but, unlike that great genius, Molière avoided mere translations, rejected the disguises, trap doors, &c., of Lope de Vega, and discerning the great effect to be produced by a character happily and truly conceived, contrived to throw it into telling situations. His great power is in seizing and portraying the ridiculous. The then disordered state of Paris, during the Regency, was not encouraging to the drama. Molière and his company, therefore, left for the provinces and visited, among other places, Bordeaux and Lyons, where he produced his first play, "L'Etourdi," which has been translated into English as "Sir Martin Marr-all" and adapted for the stage.

And here it will, perhaps, be well to say a few words on Molière's influence on English drama :

"In estimating the influence of French dramatic literature of the seventeenth Century upon our own," says Professor Ward, "it is not sufficient to attempt the task of tracing particular English plays to particular French originals." \*

"But while neither translations nor adaptations could reproduce in the English language the outward form of the masterpieces of French tragedy and comedy, it was possible to borrow subjects, plots and characters, but not to transplant the spirit of either the serious or the comic drama of contemporary France. Molière was copied by our English dramatists more unscrupulously than probably any other writer before or since, but neither his spirit nor his manner descended to his copyists. Both indeed vary to a great extent in his several works. He was the inheritor of the traditions of the new Greek comedy and of those of the French farce; he was both a satirist and humourist; he at times displays the sentiments of a loyal courtier, at others the gay spirit of opposition, which is all but indispensable to a popular French wit. His comedies range from elaborate and subtle pictures of human character, in its eternal types, to lively sketches of social follies and literary extravagances and broad appeals to the ordinary sources of vulgar merriment. Within the limits of artistic taste his style suits itself to every one of these species. And his morality,

\* [Appended are few data to serve as an illustration, "Sir Martin Marr-all," by John Dryden; Molière's "L'Etourdi"; "The Mistake," by Sir John Vanbrugh; Molière's "Le Dépit Amoureux"! "The Plain Dealer," by William Wycherley; Molière's "Le Misanthrope"; "The Mock Doctor," by Henry Fielding; Molière's "Le Medecin malgré lui"; "The Miser," by Henry Fielding, Molière's "L'Avare"; "The Non-Juror," by Colley Cibber; Molière's "Tartufe."]



it must be allowed, is as flexible as his genius, where it comes into contact with the chief social weakness of his age. English comedy in this period, which, in spite of the pleasing illusions to the contrary in which genial critics have indulged, is a comedy of actualities, strengthened itself by the influence of Molière in more than one direction. Without the help of his light and more perspicuous plots, it would have, probably, continued to resort more largely to those Spanish models in which the conduct of a complicated intrigue absorbs attention. Without the suggestive variety and the human truthfulness of some of his most powerful characters it might have continued to ring the changes on a more restricted number of types, or have altogether abandoned the endeavour to draw various characters, in favour of the easier task—to which it was so strongly inclined—of painting only the follies and the foibles, the manners and the men of its own age. While giving, in accordance with the genius of the nation to which they belonged, a more realistic colouring to his characters, the English comic dramatists substituted for the often reckless gaiety of Molière's dialogue, a much grosser salt—at times a mere pretence of salt—of their own."

The French models by which our playwrights were first attracted belong to an older day and a ruder school than those of Racine and his followers in the regular drama.

"The works of later authors after Dryden"—I am quoting Collier—"are morally amongst the foulest things by which the literature of any language can be disgraced. But if this kind of dramatic writing is to be excused for wanting, altogether, in the poetical or ideal, some of them must be acknowledged to have high skill of composition. They are excellent specimens of what has been called the Comedy of Manners, a dramatic exhibition of the externals of society. But vice is inextricably interwoven into the texture of all; alike in the broad humour and lively incident of Wycherly and in the wit of Congreve, the character-painting of Vanbrugh, and the lively, easy invention of Farquhar. They reflect, vividly, in their works the glittering and wicked life which courtiers and fashionables lived during the half-century between the Restoration and the accession of the Guelphs."

Of Molière's morality our later comedy only borrowed what suited it and the public, but it would be monstrosities to hold him responsible for the sins of which our comic drama made itself guilty in this respect.

To return to our poet's life history, "*L'Etourdi*" was followed by the "*Le Dépit Amoureux*" and met with much success. Molière continued travelling, writing, and performing in different provinces, and, at last, succeeded in establishing himself in Paris, under the protection of the King's brother. Parisian society opened a new field for his talents. Subjects of ridicule multiplied around him; the most ludicrous follies were so nursed and fostered by the highborn, that he almost feared to attack them; but they were too tempting. In addition to the amusement to be derived from showing in its true colours a most laughable affectation, he hoped to vanquish, by the arms of wit, a system of folly which had infected many of the best intellects. Nowhere was the tendency to take refuge in an imaginary world and through its medium to view the actual, more likely to assert itself, than in those circles where women of taste and accomplishments shone as the patronesses of literature and the leaders of fashion; and in the capital, at all events, ladies of a less elevated rank were certain to follow in the footsteps of their social superiors. From this point, it is well known, date the glories of those earliest French *salons* which exercised so notable an influence upon literature, as well as upon the social life of the age. This was a chance not to be missed. In the *Precieuses Ridicules*, Molière has made immortal fun of the *côterie*, but the enthusiasm of the fair sex



has, at all events, been proof against the weapon most terrible to masculine intellects. The stage had been employed often enough for personal satire, but it had not yet, in France, been made use of for the actual delineation and criticism of contemporary manners as manners and not as foibles of individuals. The play was directed against the affectation and unreal language of the members of those literary circles, of which that of the Hôtel de Rambouillet was the chief. It has but a single act, but in its way, it has never been surpassed as a piece of social satire or a piece of brilliant dialogue, illustrating ludicrous action and character. It caused irremediable confusion and gave flight to the daring follies of the clique. In each additional piece he made great manifest improvement. *L'Ecole des Maris* is one of his best, gayest and wittiest comedies.

Molière, degraded by the priesthood on account of his profession, and aware that virtue was not the peculiar inheritance of either priest or actor, by virtue of his garb of office, was naturally very inimical to false devotion, hence his favourite play—*Tartufe*—delineated immorality cloaked by religion. Its success was unbounded.

There remain to be noticed *L'Avare*, the prightly *Medecin Malgré lui*, *Le Misanthrope*, *Le Malade Imaginaire*, and the *Femmes Savantes*. The *Femmes Savantes*—pace the Vadiuses and Trissotins of society—is one of the best lessons which high comedy could give. Molière's genius exhibits itself in all his force with an ease, a purity, a more certain touch perhaps than even in the *Misanthrope*, and, if one dare say it, than in *Tartufe*. Without contradiction, if the matter were of equal importance this admirable comedy might, without disadvantage, dispute the prize with these two masterpieces. Such as it is, one marvels whence the poet has found so many resources in a secondary subject, which he had already treated, with such master-hand, in the *Precieuses Ridicules*. One must not imagine that Molière, like the good man Chrysale, wished to reduce the knowledge of woman:

*A connaître un pourpoint d'avec un haut de-chausse.*

He desired they should not push their knowledge of Greek so far as to prove embarrassing to learned men, nor should they be ever striving to capture one of them as a suitable husband for their marriageable daughter. He shows without animosity, but with a vein of comedy more vivid and more sparkling than anywhere else, what may be the perils of this whim, of this infatuation *de bel esprit* which removes from the sex those very qualities by virtue of which they are really women. Neither Madame de la Fayette, nor Madame de Sévigné, nor any one of those whose name adorns the literary roll of fame of France is wounded by the blows struck at the Philamintes, Armandes and Belises of society.

I must not omit to mention that the celebrated sonnet and madrigal with its famous *quoi qu'on die*—are copied *verbatim* from a production of the Abbé Cotin, and were originally addressed to the Duchesse de Nemours. They are both to be found in his *Œuvres galantes*, published in 1663. There is no doubt that Cotin and Ménage were the people our poet had in his mind's eye when he created the characters of Trissotin and Vadius. The latter was an adherent of the *Precieuses* school, in fact, one may say one of its poetical guides and shining lights.

Molière's last play was the *Malade Imaginaire*, brought out in 1673, at which period his career was drawing to a close. He was then really ill, but such was his sense of duty towards his fellow-actors that he would not be turned from his intention of playing the principal character. On the fourth night, in the last act, he



was seized with a violent cough and convulsions. He was carried home, and in January, 1673, he died, attended only by two poor nuns, who were in the habit of coming to Paris during Lent to ask for charity and to whom he gave a lodging in his house. The last ceremonies of the Catholic religion were refused him by two of its ministers—he was the author of *Tartufe* and they were requested to come and attend him! and when, at last, one was found who had sufficient charity in his heart he only came in time to be too late.

Molière has exercised a direct and acknowledged influence on the French language. He successfully purged the tongue of the phraseology of the *Precieuses*. Yet, whilst his satire lopped the affected turns, his judgment naturalized all those expressions which seemed to him more conformable to logic and to the genius of the French tongue. How great his influence, how deeply he entered into the spirit of the nation, is proved by the fact that many of his sayings have become proverbial. This applies not only to his own country, but to the world at large. How many of us have used the *M. Josse, vous êtes orfèvre*; *Nous avons changé tout cela*; the *Ah! les beaux yeux de ma casette*, or the *Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?* and many others, without knowing that we owe them to Molière.

Voltaire in his *Vie de Molière*, prefixed to the Edition of our poet's plays, considers the following epitaph, composed by Père Bouhours, the only one worthy of the great genius, and with the quotation this essay may fitly close:

Tu reformas et la ville et la cour ;  
 Mais quelle en fut la recompense ?  
 Les Français rougiront un jour  
 De leur peu de reconnaissance.  
 Il leur fallut un comédien  
 Qui mit à les polir sa gloire et son étude :  
 Mais Molière, à ta gloire il ne manquerait rien,  
 Si parmi les défauts que tu peignis si bien,  
 Tu les avais repris de leur ingratitude.





# LESSING'S MINNA VON BARNHELM.



A Study on the Rise and Progress of German Comedy.





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### A Study on the Rise and Progress of German Comedy.

AMONGST the Germans, as amongst the Greeks, the drama was the outcome of religious worship, the circumstances being, however, very diverse and, in many respects, contradictory.

During Lent, the history of the sufferings and death of Christ was read aloud from the gospels, and at an early period by different persons, amongst whom were apportioned the speeches of the Apostles, Herod, Pilate, the High Priest, the Jewish people, &c., whilst a priest recited the words of Christ himself, an arrangement which continued in vogue from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, in Catholic as well as Protestant churches.

In the twelfth century, already, the principal readers were attired in costume and, without doubt, acting was an early accompaniment. The language in which the principal pieces were written was Latin, and the place of representation, naturally, the church. It is self-evident that the text of the gospels was not followed verbatim; abbreviations, versifications, additions from the church traditions, were added and even embellishments attempted. The clergy were the authors of the texts of these passion plays, as well as the stage and business managers of the representations. In a few instances, *German* songs or recitations were interpolated at first, as it appears, to convey the grief of Mary at the foot of the cross.

Thus the beginnings of the German drama were religious, and from the nature of things tragical. But in the fourteenth century, the comical was already added to the tragical. The element of comedy was represented partly by the character of Judas, and partly by the merchant (at whose shop the women going to the grave bought their spices, incense and myrrh), who appeared in the costume and adopted the manners of a travelling, bragging huxster, a mountebank or quack. The church, however, could not, silently, regard such profanation, and there exist many documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries from bishops and provincial synods positively forbidding representations in church, at which such mummings and unseemingly pranks were displayed. The plays held their ground, notwithstanding, only, instead of being acted in, they were now performed outside the church, in the open air, and consequently increased in popularity. The Latin tongue fell completely into desuetude, or almost so, and gave place to German. So long as these popular plays were under the superintendence of the clergy and secular authorities, the church sanctioned, yea, even seems to have encouraged them. Thus it happened that passion plays were continued far into the last century, and in the present one they have been renewed, with no little success, in Southern Bavaria at Oberammergau. Side by side with the passion plays above referred to, there were others, having as subjects events connected with the birth of Christ, such as the

hymn of praise of the angels, the finding of the Babe by the shepherds, the adoration, &c., a few parables of our Lord, even, supplying materials for such dramatic performances. Thus in the year 1322, we find the parable of the wise and foolish virgins dramatically represented in the Thiergarten in Eisenach. The utter hopelessness of the five foolish ones made such an impression on one of the spectators, the Markgrave Frederick of Meissen, that he fell into a kind of stupor and was struck with apoplexy a few days afterwards. Later on, but still in the fourteenth century, the personal histories of a few saints were added to these biblical plays.

Such plays were called mysteries, a name common enough in France, but never in Germany, where the word *spiel*—play—has always been customary. As a particular kind of mystery, a most extraordinary piece must be mentioned, *Ein schön Spiel von Frau Jutten*, concerning the Papess Johanna, written, it is said, by a priest, Theodorich Schernberg. The piece is not, as one might imagine, comical, but it is laid down on most serious lines. In this period already there was a distinct differentiation between tragedy and comedy. The carnival plays, jests and farces, full of pointed, but at the same time coarse and often low and filthy witticisms, supplied the first demand in this respect.

The natural progress of the religious drama is the introduction on the stage of the national heroic legends, and hence into the actual life of the people. Had there been national unity, and had the consciousness of it been strong enough amongst the German people, had it not been weakened by the powerful introduction of foreign elements, by the religious and political contests of the period, one might have, in the sixteenth century, seen the legends of Siegfried, Dietrich and Hildebrand dramatically represented; they might stand out as masterpieces of dramatic art in a similar manner as the deeds of the heroes of the Trojan war and the legend of Œdipus, when handled by a Sophocles and a Euripides. That this success was not achieved lies in the fact that the elements of the heroic legend died, vanished from the memory of the people, and were refused and despised, as materials, by the most talented. The period in which it was possible to found a national theatre passed by. Had the two great Latin poets of the sixteenth century, Eobanus Hessus and Euricius Cordus, had Frischlin, who composed Latin dramas, made use of their great poetical talents in the service of German poetry, particularly in the direction of the drama, had they, or their literary peers, given us a tragedy of Siegfried's death, of Markgrave Rüdiger's or of Etzel's sons, had they shewn us old Hildebrand and his son, or even Onith and Hugdietrich, yes, even only Prince Ernst, what a different course would not the German drama have shaped! Perhaps, under such conditions, the sixteenth century might have done for Germany what it did for England, given her a Shakespeare.

Thus little of a lasting nature was produced. Time and efforts were wasted in perfectly fruitless endeavours, which were soon forgotten. It is true, however, that some attempts at the creation of a national theatre were really undertaken, but they were like the seeds that fell in stony places. These dramas, which we now regard as the most remarkable evidences of this literary period, remained, in their own day, unknown and unnoticed, and were simply despised. Thus, in the following period, the attempts at the creation of a drama again failed to succeed, a third attempt, in the eighteenth century, met with no better result, until, at last, Lessing arrived at the only possible solution. The most important products of the sixteenth century are, however, comedy and satire. In no century were the contrasts more pronounced; a period in which immoderate longings after material enjoyments went side by side with a surprising earnestness of life and depth of soul, when strict



scholarship and indefatigable industry walked hand in hand with crass stupidity and mental darkness, when brideless immorality gave the arm to chastity, order and asceticism. The events of such a period readily lent themselves to comical and satirical treatment, but we must not expect to find the contrasts of the time toned down.

The comedy of the century is sparkling, passionate, haughty, sturdy, pert and by no means free from impurities, but, to the ardent student who dives into this sea of contrasts and contradictions, a rich and ever-increasing treat is in store.

With what is known as the first Silesian School, we come to the modern period, and amongst its most famous scions (so far as we are concerned for the purpose of this study), we number Andreas Gryphius, who has been called the father of German dramatic poesy. He is particularly to be noticed for the important advance made in his two comedies, *Peter Squenz* and *Horribilicribrifax*. In the last-named piece, the two characters of Captains Horribilicribrifax and Diridaradatundarides, are capitial pictures of the braggadocios of the Thirty Years' War—the speeches of the one are interlarded with broken Italian, of the other with broken French. The ex-schoolmaster, Sempronius, is a splendid caricature, who is always quoting Cicero and Virgil, and never forgets to add his, "Inquit Cicero, canit Virgilius." In one respect Gryphius is certainly an exception to his associates. He does in these pieces attempt "to hold the mirror up to nature" and rid himself otherwise of the stiff monotony and formality of the first Silesian School.

The name of Johann Christoph Gottsched—a name indelibly connected with all that is inartistic, pedantic and coarse—is only mentioned on account of his involuntary services to German literature. We have only to deal with him here as far as he affects the drama, and more particularly comedy. It was he who put an end to the coarse, immoral plays of the time, and banished the buffoon from the stage. It is true that with him there was lost, perhaps for ever, the last remnant of the popular theatre, yet his proceeding was, to a certain extent, justified. The proper course would have been to have remodelled and enobled this popular comical character—for it was only a very vulgar, low, plebeian buffoon that he got rid of—but this was a task that neither Gottsched, nor his contemporaries were capable of executing. During the first third of the eighteenth century Gottsched reigned supreme as a kind of literary dictator; in 1740 he commenced his quarrel with Bodmer, which terminated with his complete discomfiture, and when, a few years later, he took up arms against Klopstock and, subsequently, against Lessing, he became perfectly inane and despicable. He died in 1766 having long outlived his fame.

Amongst the most notable writers of the pre-Lessing period, we must mention the brothers Schlegel, of whom Johann Elias Schlegel was the dramatist. Weisse, although a contemporary of Lessing, belongs, according to his style, to the elder Silesian-Gottschedian school, although, in many instances, his writings bear traces of the influences of a later period.

Herewith we come to Lessing and his *Minna von Barnhelm*. The lines on which the comedy is composed and its animated action alone, raise it far above anything that had preceded it, far above any contemporary dramatic production. Madame de Stael in her work *De l'Allemagne* says: "*Le théâtre allemand n'existait pas avant Lessing; on n'y jouait que des traductions ou des imitations des pièces étrangères.*" The reason why this piece stands out in such relief is that it has, as a background, the great and important events of the Seven Years' War, and as contents, not merely a fabricated, invented plot, but a true story; an action not



contained within the narrow limits of domestic life and paltry incidents, but resulting from the stupendous conflict of nations ; not situations for which sympathies had to be artificially awakened during the course the play, but of which already existed, not merely amongst *some* classes of the community, but amongst all, even amongst the whole nation, so that Minna von Barnhelm has truly been called the first national German dramatic composition.

It will be well to cast a glimpse at the historical surroundings that add such force to this comedy.

Frederick II., King of Prussia, born in 1712, inherited from his father and grandfather a well-drilled army—the model of its age—and a well-filled treasury. Prussia in those days was much more limited in extent than it is to-day. Hardly had Frederick ascended the throne of his ancestors, ere he laid hands on Silesia, one of the fairest provinces of the Austrian crown. In 1741 he determined on war and lit a firebrand in Europe that was only extinguished at the peace of Hubertsburg, twenty-two years afterwards. Three bloody campaigns did the great King wage to maintain his hold over the province he had filched, the most notable being the last, the third Silesian or Seven Years' War. In this campaign he reached the zenith of military glory. Leuthen and Rossbach were his Dunbar and Worcester. Of the first great action Napoleon said "that it was a masterpiece of movements, manœuvres and resolution. Alone it was sufficient to immortalize Frederick and place him in the ranks of the greatest generals. He attacked a stronger army than his own, in position and victorious, with an army composed of troops which had just been defeated, yet he won a victory without paying too dearly for it." The King's success at Rossbach secured, politically, to Prussia what Lessing's writings did to Germany ; it freed the land from the French incubus. After years of toil and trouble, years in which the great reaper gathered in a mighty harvest, after seeing nearly the whole of the European continent in arms against him, the King returned in triumph to his capital on the Spree. But alas for the change ! The destroying angel had passed over the land. Everywhere the results of the stupendous struggle were visible : fields untilled, houses destroyed, cities sacked, his own capital almost reduced to ashes, labourers wanting, or their places supplied by women (one-sixth of the whole male population had been sacrificed to the ambition of the King,) widows and orphans bewailing the loss of loved ones, the coinage debased, and the land threatened with famine and disease. The King, however, strove not in vain to alleviate the distress caused by the wars. To supply field labour, many men were at once discharged and sent to their homes ; new houses were erected to take the place of those demolished by friend and foe alike ; the financial credit of the nation redeemed ; widows and orphans pensioned and valiant officers rewarded ; and to show the world that he was not the impoverished monarch he was taken to be, notwithstanding the withdrawal of the English subsidy in 1761, he built the famous palace of Sans Souci near Potsdam.

Lessing himself had been an actor in the drama of this last campaign. During five years of carnage he was Secretary at Breslau to General Tauentzien, commanding in Silesia. How thoroughly he entered into its spirit, how perfectly he made his own the hopes and fears of that huge living machine called the army, the work under review admirably delineates. These facts should be borne in mind in order that we may the better live with Tellheim, Werner and Just, that we may understand the spirit of a service, which twice within the last hundred years has established its claim to the foremost rank, and in our own day has again become the model of the world.



The *dramatis personæ* of the comedy are :

Major von Tellheim, late of H.M. Service.

Minna von Barnhelm.

Count von Bruchsal, her uncle.

Franziska, her maid.

Just, the Major's bātman.

Paul Werner, ex-sergeant in the Major's regiment.

The Landlord.

A Lady in Mourning.

An Orderly.

Riccant de la Marlinière.

The scene is alternately in the saloon and in an adjoining room of an hotel.

The play opens, introducing us to Just, the Major's servant, who has just awoke from a somewhat disturbed slumber. In his sleep, he has been quarrelling with the landlord of the inn at which he and his master are stopping. A few moments afterwards, mine host enters and tries to commence a conversation with Just, who is in no mood for chatting with him, seeing that the landlord has let the Major's room to some strangers and given him an inferior apartment. Boniface, wishing to smooth matters over, suggests some liquid refreshment, "something good."

JUST.—Don't trouble yourself, landlord. May the first drop turn to poison that—But I won't swear on an empty stomach.

LANDLORD (To the boy bringing the liqueur).—Give it to me. Go. Now, Mr. Just, something really splendid, strong, delicious, wholesome. That'll put you to rights again.

JUST.—I hardly ought to. But why should I let my health suffer for his want of manners?

LAND.—Your health, Mr. Just.

JUST.—(Handing the glass back).—Not bad, But, for all that landlord, you are a brute.

LAND.—Come, come, take another one, quickly. One can't stand on one leg.

JUST.—(After having drunk).—Good, I really must confess it. Very good. Home-made, landlord?

LAND.—Heaven forbid! Real Danziger, genuine, double-distilled Danziger.

JUST.—You see, landlord, if I could, I would play the hypocrite for stuff like that, but I can't. I must out with it. You really are a brute.

LAND.—No one ever told me that before. Another glass, Mr. Just.

JUST.—I don't mind. (Drinks.) Capital stuff really, very good indeed. But truth is also an excellent thing. Landlord, you're a brute, for all that.

LAND.—If I were, should I take it so phlegmatically?

JUST.—Oh yes, for a churl seldom gets angry.

LAND.—Won't you have another, Mr. Just, a fourfold rope holds all the better?

JUST.—No. Enough is as good as a feast. And what good would it do you, landlord? I should stick to my word till the last drop in the bottle. Bah! landlord, for shame, to have such good Danziger and such bad manners.

In the midst of the excitement, the Major enters and informs the landlord of his intention of leaving the hostelry.

v. TELLHEIM.—I owe you money. During my absence you clear my things out of my room. You must be paid. I must seek quarters elsewhere. Quite natural.

The low, cringing nature of the landlord soon makes itself felt. In his writing desk, the Major has a large sum of money of which mine host, now, becomes aware,



and forthwith regrets the premature steps he has taken in turning the Major out. On his exit, Tellheim informs his servant that he is without means—the money in the desk really belongs to Paul Werner, the ex-sergeant—and orders him to write out his account, as their connection must be severed.

The sixth scene is one of the most pathetic in the whole play. A lady in mourning, the widow of one of Tellheim's former staff officers, calls upon him to pay a debt, which her late husband had contracted with the Major. Tellheim, hearing that she has had to sell her carriage to be in a position to fulfil her dead spouse's last request, nobly protests that he cannot find any acknowledgment of his brother officer's indebtedness, that he never owed him any money, or that if he did, he paid it long ago, and, with the utmost delicacy declining to receive the money, requests her to invest it for the benefit of her orphan son. Lest future, perhaps greater want should tempt him to make use of the note of hand, which he has all the time had in his pocket-book, Tellheim, on the departure of the widow withdraws and destroys it.

Just now returns and presents his account.

v. TELLHEIM.—I cannot keep you any longer. I must learn to help myself and do without servants.

He opens the account and reads his servant's statement, in which the latter has debited him with his salary and some trifling current expenses and credited him with various sums expended on his (Just's) behalf, whilst in hospital, together with a certain sum advanced to his father, showing him his master's debtor to a considerable amount. To the Major's reiterated statement that he must go, Just replies :

Run me down as much as you like, sir. I'll not think worse of myself than of my dog. Last winter, during the twilight, I was walking along the Canal and I heard something whining. I climbed down and stretched out my hand in the direction of the voice, thinking to save a child, but drew a poodle dog out of the water. No odds, thought I. The dog followed me, but I don't like poodles. In vain did I chase him away ; in vain beat him. At night, I wouldn't let him come into my room. He remained in front of the door. When he came near me I kicked him. He yelped, looked at me and wagged his tail. Not a bit of bread has he received from me and yet, I'm the only one he heeds and who may touch him. He jumps about in front of me, and goes through his tricks without being told. He's an ugly poodle, but a very good dog. If he goes on much longer in this way I shall leave off disliking him.

The Major, touched by his servant's faithful adherence, resolves to retain him. A footman, sent by the visitors, who have occupied the Major's rooms, interrupts the conversation. The difference in character between Just, who is lovingly attached to Tellheim, and this man, who changes service every six weeks, is admirably drawn, though the scene contains but a few lines, not the least forcible being the closing ones, containing the officer's rebuff. The Major inconvenienced by the studied politeness of the new comers, decides to leave the hostelry at once and, in order to liquidate his debts, hands a valuable ring to Just, with instructions to pawn it and settle the bill out of the amount realized. Whilst Just is soliloquizing, Werner enters. The latter, since his discharge, has become a landed proprietor, but, hearing that His Royal Highness Prince Heraclius of Persia is about to undertake a war against Turkey, he decides to sell his estate and enlist under the banner of the great hero of the East. The part proceeds of the sale of the property he brings to the Major, for his own use. Being informed of the



landlord's behaviour to his late commander, Just and he discuss a plan of serving him out.

WERNER.—Has he offended the Major? I'm ready.

JUST.—Supposing we waited for him one evening, when coming from the club, and gave him a jolly good hiding?

WERNER.—In the evening? Waylay him? Two to one? No, that won't do.

JUST.—Or, suppose we burn his house over his head?

WERNER.—Turn incendiary? By Jove, fellow, one can see you belonged to the Army Service Corps. Bah! I'm disgusted with you.

Minna and her maid Franziska, the new visitors at the hotel, are, at the opening of the second act, conversing together, and we learn that Minna is in search of Tellheim—who is engaged to her—and who has only once written to her since the conclusion of peace. In the midst of their chat, a knock at the door announces the landlord, who comes to obtain the necessary information from his visitors required by the police as to their name, rank, occupation, business, etc.

LAND.—Your ladyship is, without doubt, acquainted with the wise regulations of our police.

MINNA.—Not in the least, Mr. Landlord.

LAND.—We, landlords, are not allowed to lodge a visitor in our hotels for twenty-four hours without handing to the proper authorities a written statement of his name, native place, profession, the business that brings him hither, the probable duration of his stay, etc.

MINNA.—Very well.

LAND.—Your ladyship will therefore be pleased to—(sits down and gets writing materials ready).

MINNA.—With pleasure. My name is—

LAND.—One moment. (Writes) Date 22nd of August of this year, arrived at the "King of Spain"—Now, my lady, your name?

MINNA.—Miss von Barnhelm.

LAND.—(Writing) von Barnhelm. Coming, my lady, from?

MINNA.—From my estates in Saxony.

LAND.—Estates in Saxony—from Saxony. Indeed, indeed, my lady, from Saxony?

FRANZISKA.—Well! Why not? I suppose it is no crime in this country, to come from Saxony.

LAND.—A crime! God forbid! That would be quite a new crime. Thus, from Saxony, Ah, ah, from Saxony! Dear Saxony! But, if I am not mistaken, my lady, Saxony is not small and has several, what shall I say?—Districts, Provinces. Our police is very particular, my lady.

MINNA.—I understand. Well then, from my estates in Thuringia.

LAND.—From Thuringia, yes, that is better, my lady. (Writes and reads) Miss von Barnhelm, coming from her estates in Thuringia, waiting-woman and two servants.

FRANZISKA.—Waiting-woman? That, I suppose, is meant for me?

LAND.—Yes, my pretty dear.

FRANZISKA.—Well, Mr. Landlord, then instead of waiting-woman put lady's-maid. I hear the police is very particular. A mistake might result from it and cause me some trouble, when my banns are published. For, really, I am a spinster and my name is Franziska, surname Willig, Franziska Willig. I also come from Thuringia. My father was a miller on one of my lady's estates. They call it Klein Rammsdorf. The mill now belongs to my brother. When young, I came to the Manor House and I have been brought up with my lady. We are both the same age, twenty-one next Candlemas. I have learnt everything her ladyship has learnt. I shall be very pleased if the police learn to know me thoroughly.

LAND.—Very well, my dear. I'll remember that for future inquiries. But now, my lady, your business here?

MINNA.—My business?

LAND.—Does your ladyship desire anything from His Majesty?

MINNA.—Oh, no.

LAND.—Or have you anything to do in the Supreme Court?

MINNA.—No.

LAND.—Or?

MINNA.—No, no, I am here solely on my own business.

LAND.—Quite so, my lady, but what is the nature of your business?

MINNA.—It is—Franziska, I believe we are under examination.

FRANZISKA.—Mr. Landlord, surely the police don't want to know a woman's secrets?

LAND.—Certainly, my dear, the police want to know everything, particularly secrets?

FRANZISKA.—Well, my lady, what is to be done? Listen then, Mr. Landlord, but mind it must remain between us and the police.

MINNA.—What will the little fool say?

FRANZISKA.—We have come to kidnap one of the king's officers.

LAND.—How? What, my child?

FRANZISKA.—Or be captured by him, which amounts about to the same thing.

MINNA.—Franziska, are you mad? Landlord, the saucy thing is making a fool of you.

LAND.—I hope not. She may joke as much as she likes with your humble servant, but not with the worshipful police—

MINNA.—Mr. Landlord, I don't quite know how to act. I think it would be better if you left the whole matter until the arrival of my uncle.

The landlord now produces the Major's ring that Just has pledged with him, asking Minna's opinion as to its value. She, immediately, recognises it as the one she exchanged with Tellheim, on becoming engaged; learns that the person she is in search of is in the town; that he is stopping at the very hotel, and that it is he who has been turned out of the rooms, she and her maid are occupying. The landlord is immediately despatched in search of the Major, and Minna, overcome with joy, left alone with Franziska, loads her with presents, so that she may rejoice with her. Just appears, but declines to fetch his master, who, he says, dislikes ladies, who are too polite, quite as much as landlords, who are too uncivil. Franziska, wishing to enlist him in their service, tells him that the lady is the Major's sister. Just replies:

I know better than that. The Major hasn't any sisters. Twice during the last six months he sent me to his family in Courland. However, there are different kinds of sisters.

and leaves the room, having mentioned, however, in the course of conversation that the Major is at the Café next door. Thither the landlord is at once sent and the maid ordered to follow him, so that the lady's name shall not be revealed. The maid returns and in a few moments afterwards Tellheim, accompanied by the landlord, makes his appearance.

TELLHEIM.—Pardon me, my lady. To find Miss von Barnhelm here—

MINNA.—Cannot be altogether unexpected. Am I to pardon you, that I am still your Minna? Heaven pardon you that I am still Miss von Barnhelm.

Franziska takes charge of the landlord, under pretence of wishing to go and arrange the bill of fare.

TELLHEIM.—You here. What are you in search of, my lady?

MINNA.—I seek nothing more, (going up to him with open arms) I have found all I sought.

Tellheim protests that reason and necessity alike prevent him, in his present circumstances, keeping his plighted troth.



MINNA.—Reason, necessity command you to forget me ? I am a great lover of reason and have much respect for necessity. Let me hear how reasonable this reason, how necessary this necessity.

TELLHEIM.—At your service. Listen then, my lady. You call me Tellheim. The name is correct ; but you are mistaken, if you think that I am the Tellheim you knew in your own country, the prosperous man, full of hopes and of desire for glory, master of his own body and soul, before whom the portals of honour and glory stood open, who, if not worthy of your heart and hand, dared to hope to become worthier every day. I am as little the Tellheim of those days, as I am my own father. Both belong to the past. I am Tellheim the dismissed, a man with his honour stained, a cripple, a beggar. It was to the former you betrothed yourself, do you wish to keep your word to the latter ?

MINNA.—That sounds very tragical. But, sir, till I find the other one—I can't help it, I am infatuated with the Tellheims—this one will have to help me out of the difficulty. Your hand, dear beggar.

Tellheim, unable to endure a conversation that is rapidly driving him to despair, rushes from her presence.

The third act brings Just back with a letter from the Major to Minna, and a request to Franziska, to come and see him. An amusing conversation ensues between Franziska and the bātmān as to the Major's former servants, Just being valet, gamekeeper, footman and coachman rolled into one.

FRANZISKA.—Well, really ! To let such a lot of good servants go and keep the very worst one ! I should like to know what your master sees in you ?

JUST—Perhaps he finds I'm honest.

FRANZISKA.—Oh ! One is mighty little if one's only honest.

It thereupon appears that all the other servants have been guilty of various misdeeds, which Just recounts in most amusing and ambiguous terms.

The landlord now reappears and relates to Franziska an episode in the scene between Minna and Tellheim, which is supposed to happen off the boards, and requests her to draw her mistress's attention to the fact that she still retains his ring.

LAND.—I don't want it back. However, I'll put the hundred pistolen I lent on it down on my lady's account.

Werner comes again on the stage, and having, as we know, heard from Just the treatment the Major has received at his hands, warns the maid against the landlord. In the scene which follows, Werner tries to make Franziska believe that Tellheim has plenty of money and shows us how proud he is of his military title. He prefers "if she doesn't mind" to be addressed as "Sergeant." He maintains that if the Major has pawned a ring, it is only because he does not value it very much. Franziska, wishing to solve matters, delivers Tellheim's note to her mistress. Werner, whilst waiting for her return, hits upon a plan to give the Major some money. He paid Mrs. Marloff (the lady in mourning) a visit a fortnight ago—so he tells us—and found the poor woman ill and at her wit's end to know how to pay the debt owing to the Major by her late husband. He again visited her, but found her gone. Quite sure that she has not been able to pay, Werner determines to hand the money himself to Tellheim, as if coming from her. Whilst the former is deep in thought, the Major himself appears. The ensuing scene is a splendid one. Tellheim's noble nature, and Werner's devoted attachment appeal to us irresistibly.

Werner finds his little scheme quite upset, when the Major tells him that the widow has paid the debt. He is, however, much hurt that the Major should prefer to sell and pawn his things, rather than borrow from his friends.

TELLHEIM.—It is not seemly that I should become your debtor.

WERNER.—Not seemly? One hot day, a day made hot by the sun and the enemy, when your orderly with the canteen was missing and you came to me and said, “Werner, have you anything to drink?” and I handed you my water-bottle and you took it and drank, was that seemly? On my soul if a drink of putrid water was not worth more than all this rubbish (takes the money bag and hands it to the Major). Take it, dear Major, fancy it is water. God made this also for all.

TELLHEIM.—You torture me, don’t you hear, I won’t become your debtor.

WERNER.—First it wasn’t seemly, now you won’t. Oh! That’s a different thing. You won’t become my debtor. How, if you were my debtor, already, Major? Or do you owe the man nothing, who parried the blow, that was about to cut your head in two and another time, cut the arm off the body of him who was going to send a bullet through your breast? Or is my neck of less importance than my money bag? If those are noble thoughts, by the poor soul, they are very absurd ones.

TELLHEIM.—Whom are you talking to like that, Werner? We are alone, I may speak. If a third person heard us, it would be bragging. I acknowledge with pleasure that you, twice, saved my life. But friend, what was wanting, given the chance, that I should not have done as much for you? Well?

WERNER.—Only the chance. Who doubted it, Major? Have I not seen you risk your life for a private, when we were in a hand-to-hand fight.

Pressed more and more, the Major, eventually, promises that, if in need, he will apply to Werner for assistance. Franziska now re-appears, but seeing the Major and sergeant in conversation retires. A few moments afterwards, she again comes forward with a letter in her hand. Tellheim, expecting an answer from Minna, is surprised to find that it is his own letter returned. The maid declares that her mistress was not at all desirous of reading it, seeing that the writer himself was coming to visit her (she has requested his company for a drive) and that he can explain himself by word of mouth. An amusing pantomime takes place between Werner and Franziska, which gives us an opportunity of judging of Tellheim’s gentlemanly feelings.

*“Werner, Du hast doch nicht vergessen was ich Dir mehrmals gesagt habe dass man über einen gewissen Punkt mit den Frauenzimmern nie scherzen muss.”*

The Major promises to attend “at three sharp.” A short scene between Franziska and Werner, and another, between the maid and her mistress, in which the latter discloses her intention to play a trick on Tellheim, brings the third act to a conclusion.

The opening scene of the fourth act explains to us Minna’s plan of campaign. Whilst discussing matters with Franziska, a knock announces a visitor, who turns out to be a certain Riccaut de la Marlinière, a French adventurer. Of his speeches, a conglomeration of his native tongue and broken German, it is impossible to give an adequate English translation, at all events one that shall convey the humour of the original. Riccaut pretends to have come in search of the Major, to tell him that his case is about to be favourably considered by the Minister of War. Minna wishes to know whom the Major has to thank for such an interest in his affairs, and Riccaut gives an account of himself and family. He is “le chevalier Riccaut de la Marlinière, signeur de pret-au-vol de la branche de prens d’or.”



Being without employment, he has taken to the, to him, agreeable occupation of pigeon plucking, and accepts money from Minna, to restore his fallen fortunes. The character of this chevalier d'industrie hurt the national prejudices of Madame de Stael.

"*Dans cette même pièce*"—she says—"il y a un rôle d'aventurier Français tout à fait manqué ; il faut avoir la main légère pour trouver ce qui peut prêter à la moquerie dans les Français, et la plupart des étrangers ne les ont peints qu'avec des traits lourds et dont la ressemblance n'est ni délicate ni frappante."

Werner comes with a message from the Major, informing Minna that his sudden meeting with the paymaster, has prevented him (Tellheim) keeping his appointment, but that the delay will be but short. The scene serves to introduce Werner to Minna, and is followed by a still shorter one between mistress and maid, preparatory to the appearance of Tellheim. Prior to his arrival, she has taken off her own ring and put on Tellheim's.

MINNA.—Not that I quite know why, but I think I see an occasion, where it will come in handy.

The Major now explains to his fiancée the reasons that prevent him fulfilling his engagement.

TELLHEIM.—You remember, my lady, that I was ordered to enforce, with the utmost severity, a large contribution, in ready money, in the district in which you reside.

MINNA.—Yes, I remember very well. I loved you for that very deed, without having, even, seen you.

TELLHEIM.—The communities gave me their bills and the treaty of peace being signed, I intended to have had them entered amongst the legal liabilities. The bills were declared valid, but my title to them disputed. The authorities ridiculed me, when I assured them that I had advanced the amount in ready money. It was regarded as a bribe, a gratuity, because I had so quickly agreed upon the lowest amount that, at the last extremity, I had authority to be satisfied with. Thus the bill passed out of my hands and, if it is met, the amount will, surely, not be paid to me. This action on the part of the authorities wounds my honour, my lady. Permission to resign I should have demanded, if I had not obtained it.

Hearing the news brought by Riccaut and seeing in his conversation with the paymaster a partial confirmation thereof, Tellheim characteristically exclaims :

I don't want mercy ! I want justice ! In short, my lady, if I am to be deprived of my own, in such a shameful manner ; if the most perfect reparation is not made to my honour, I cannot become your husband. For, in the eyes of the world, I am unworthy. Miss von Barnhelm deserves a blameless husband. A Love, that does not hesitate to expose its object to contempt, is despicable. He who is not ashamed to owe all his happiness to the blind love of a woman, is a villain.

Minna, hereupon, returns the engagement ring.

Be it then. We will never have known one another.

Franziska, her mistress having left, to hide her tears from "the traitor," informs the Major that Minna has been disinherited by her uncle, the Count von Bruchsal, because of her continued love for him (Tellheim) and she had run away from home to seek the object of her affection. As Minna had foretold :

The man, who now refuses me with all my riches, will defy the whole world for me, when he hears I am unhappy and forsaken.

Fully convinced of the truth of the lady's maid's statement, the Major meets Werner at the opening of the last act :

V. TELLHEIM.—Ah, Werner! I have been looking for you everywhere. Where have you been?

WERNER.—And I have been looking for you, Major. That's just the way when one's looking for anybody. I have brought you good news.

V. TELLHEIM.—I don't want your news, now, I want money. Quick, Werner, give me as much as you have, and try to raise as much more as you can.

WERNER.—With pleasure. There is some. There are a hundred louis d'or, and here a hundred ducats.

V. TELLHEIM.—The hundred louis d'or, Werner, go and bring to Just. He is, at once, to redeem the ring he pawned this morning. But, where will you find more? I want much more.

WERNER.—Let that be my care.

The succeeding scene, a short one, is followed by a dialogue between Tellheim and Franziska. She tries to induce him closely to examine the ring he has received from her mistress, but he is too much occupied by the thought of a reconciliation with Minna. Franziska leaves, and the Major, alone, turns over in his mind the best manner of pleading his cause, when mistress and maid arrive, attired for the proposed drive. Minna professes to know the object of the Major's visit, viz., to return her own engagement ring, but, as she has no time to lose, she asks him, with affected coolness, to return it to her maid. Tellheim is, however, not to be denied. He tries to urge his suit, to induce her to consider his previous refusal withdrawn, to forgive and forget and become his wife. In the midst of this conversation at cross purposes an orderly arrives, delivering to Tellheim an autograph letter from the King, which should have reached him the day previously. The investigation of the Major's affairs has been satisfactorily concluded; he has been found absolutely blameless, his honour unstained and, his royal master informs him that, not only will his demands be paid in full, but that he, the King, has commanded all claims against the Major to be written off. At the same time Tellheim is invited, his health permitting, to re-enter the service.

Whilst the perusal of the missive has been proceeding, the landlord again makes his appearance, and Franziska fancies him prompted by inquisitiveness to learn the contents of the letter.

LAND.—Who wants to know about the letter? I have come about the ring. Her ladyship must return it immediately. Just has come to redeem it.

MINNA.—(whispering to him.)—You tell Just that it is redeemed already, and tell him also by whom—by me.

Fortified by the royal letter, Tellheim urges his suit with renewed vigour, but Minna, still carrying out her plan, declines all his offers and plies him with the very answers he made use of, in a previous scene, when bringing forward his reasons for breaking off the engagement. She will not, so she tells him, be without some protection, since she has applied to her country's ambassador. At this moment Just comes back and informs the Major, *sotto voce*, of the fate of his ring. Tellheim, enraged, orders him to repeat the message aloud—

JUST.—The landlord says that Miss von Barnhelm has taken the ring I pledged with him, having recognized it as her own, and that she refuses to give it up.

V. TELLHEIM.—Is that true, my lady? No, it can't be true.



MINNA (smiling).—And why not, Tellheim; why can't it be true?

v. TELLHEIM (impetuously).—Well, granted. What an awful suspicion has dawned upon me. Now I know you false, faithless one.

The Major is haunted by the terrible thought, that Minna's real object in seeking him was to break off her engagement, that chance brought her own ring into her possession and that, by cunning, she had been able to play into his own hands. Tellheim, in his rage, refuses all assistance from Werner, who now returns with the money.

WERNER.—Here I am already, Major.

v. TELLHEIM.—Who wants you.

WERNER.—Here's some money. 1,000 Pistolen.

v. TELLHEIM.—I don't want them.

WERNER.—To-morrow, Major, twice as much will be at your service.

v. TELLHEIM.—Keep your money.

WERNER.—But it's your money, Major. I believe you don't notice to whom you're speaking.

v. TELLHEIM.—Away with it, I say.

WERNER.—What ails you? I'm Werner.

Minna now finds that, having sown the wind, she is likely to reap the whirlwind and begs the Major to believe that the whole matter is the result of some misunderstanding. At this moment two footmen announce the arrival of the Count von Bruchsal. Tellheim naturally fancies it is the "stern parent" come to fetch Minna home.

v. TELLHEIM.—Who, who is coming? Your uncle, my lady? Let him come, let him come. Don't be afraid. Not even by a look, shall he dare to insult you. He will have to deal with me.

They forgive and forget, and Minna immediately clears away any remaining suspicion of the Major, by convincing him that he is still in possession of his own ring, the one she originally plighted her troth with to him; assures him that the cruel uncle, her hasty flight, his anger, her being disinherited, is all fiction and, happy lovers, they go to welcome the new arrival.

The consent to the marriage is given and, after a speedy and hearty reconciliation between Werner and the Major, the comedy closes with the following scene:

FRANZISKA.—Sergeant!

WERNER. (rubbing his eyes).—Well?

FRANZISKA.—Sergeant!

WERNER.—Well, little woman, what do you want?

FRANZISKA.—Just look at me, Sergeant.

WERNER.—I can't yet. I can't make out what has got into my eyes.

FRANZISKA.—Well, but do just look at me.

WERNER.—I'm afraid I've looked at you too much already, little woman. Well, there, now I'm looking at you. What now?

FRANZISKA.—Mr. Wachtmeister, don't you want a Mrs. Wachtmeisterinn?

WERNER.—Are you in earnest, little woman?

FRANZISKA.—Perfectly.

WERNER.—Would you even go to Persia?

FRANZISKA.—Wherever you like.

WERNER.—Certain? Hallo, Major, no bragging. Now I have, at least, as good a girl and as true a friend as you. Shake hands on it, little woman. Done. Ten years hence you'll be a General's wife or a widow.

A great deal has been said of the influence which Diderot exerted on Lessing and his *Minna von Barnhelm*. Madame de Stael states the case well, giving it as her opinion that : “ *Diderot dans ses pièces mettait l'affectation du naturel à la place de l'affectation de la convention, tandis que le talent de Lessing est vraiment simple et sincère.* ”

Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* is the first national German comedy, and if we wish to be honest, says Stahr, it has remained the only one. For, where in German literature, from Lessing to the present day, do we find such a drama? One, not going back for its plot to the dim, distant past, but attaching itself to the immediate present of the poet's life, to the most important events and to the most celebrated hero and monarch of the century. Where do we find one so specifically German as to its contents, portraying with such clearness and simplicity, types so true to nature, which, whilst leaving the great King off the stage makes us feel both his greatness and his importance and glorifies his sublimest virtue—justice—in such a marked degree.

Goethe has for ever fixed the value and importance of the work as “the foremost product of a German mind of specifically contemporary contents, the value of which, for this very reason is incalculable.” Goethe had himself written his first youthful dramatic productions on the model of this piece, had schooled his prentice hand on the masterly conception of the exposition, and the old man lingered with pleasure “over the charming simplicity and gaiety, over the truly German spirit, the free and fresh knowledge of the world, as depicted in the piece, which, in the dark literary period in which it appeared, shone like a bright meteor, and exercised an incredible influence on the studious youth of the day.” If Goethe seems to find fault with the scenes, in the third act, in which the sergeant and Franziska appear too prominently, he immediately excuses them, saying that Lessing had learnt to love and had taken a pleasure in these two characters and had developed them somewhat more fully than was necessary. But, the national character and popularity of the piece just rest on those scenes; a popularity which a century ago was unequalled, which in our own day has not diminished and which, so long as the national character maintains itself, cannot be extinguished.

Even to-day, notwithstanding the extraordinary events which the German people has seen enacted, Lessing's characters, in their poetical truthfulness, speak to us as witnesses and co-actors of an important and almost unique period. Whilst the ridiculous Riccant, the noble sergeant, the faithful Just belong to comedy, it is Tellheim, in whom Lessing has given us his very soul, in whom Lessing's muse and Lessing's character speak to us. For Tellheim, not Minna, is the principal rôle of this piece, the motive of which, the soldier's honour, is immeasurably far removed from the absurd code of Spanish cavaliers as formulated by Lope de Vega and Calderon. The conflict between honour and love that Tellheim experiences, in consequence of his action against the Government and his poverty, caused by his noble deed, is infinitely more true and bears no comparison to the ideas of honour, which, in the Spanish poets, produces dramatic conflicts. It is the ideal conception of the honour of an officer and nobleman, the result of training in the army of the immortal Prussian King that forms Tellheim's rule of life. He is a model officer, a truly knightly character in the most beautiful acceptation of the term. An excellent master and superior, adored by his servant and subordinates, on account of his humanity, which makes him treat even the wretched landlord respectfully, that example of a creeping, toadying, narrow-minded race, instead of punishing him as he deserves; a true friend, imbued with the deepest love,



since it is full of reverence for women, full of a respect that induces him to regard his union with his betrothed as impossible, seeing he has suffered in name and fortune, suffered to an extent that seems irreparable, since his honour is affected. Thus does he stand before us, thus does he develop himself during the course of the action. He cannot keep his word—since in his idea it would make them unhappy, would degrade them—plighted to the rich, happy bride, surrounded by proud and noble relatives, but he throws himself at the feet of the same girl when she is disinherited, cast out by her family on his account, and begs to be allowed to devote his life to her. Proud, when only to be a recipient, he is full of humility and devotion when the opportunity presents itself for him to be a doer. And, at this point, where nature triumphs over conventionality, true humanity over the prejudice of institutions, love over caste honour, he receives, at the hands of his gracious king and commander, his highest merit, his most perfect reward in the acknowledgment of his unstained honour. In this incomparable piece, the most beautiful that a heart full of love and honour ever composed, honour binds the wreath for love. For, in this *Minna von Barnhelm* there is, as Goethe once said, “not only Lessing’s mind, but also his great, warm, noble heart, his heart full of love and honour, the very Lessing.”

Tellheim (according to his character) is Lessing, and in his later years he (Lessing) was to furnish an extraordinary example in proof of this assertion, in which, through a similar exaggerated delicacy of feeling in money matters, he caused himself no end of pain.

What justice! What clemency! exclaims Tellheim after having read the King’s missive which restores his honour and fortune. But clemency held only the second rank, justice claims the first place. It is this idea of justice that the Tellheim-Lessing made use of for the glorification of that sovereign whose genius had induced the Major of the piece to become a soldier in order to serve him. It was the same desire that caused the poet to exert himself, for years, to arrive at a similar goal. Whilst composing the comedy, he was awaiting the consummation of such a wish. Hence the poet’s openheartedness appears so much the greater in this play. It was a piece of unheard-of temerity, and that—in his own capital—to dare to bring the King, though indirectly, on the stage, and in Hamburg, in Paris even, the express approval of the Prussian Ambassador was sought, before permission for the performance was given. The scruples of the authorities were characteristically announced in the words: “*Man könne zwar über Gott raisonniren und dogmatiziren, aber nicht über die Regierung und die Polizei.*” One might argue and dogmatize about the Deity, but not about the Government and the Police!

But still more unprecedented, in the German literature of the period, was a figure like Tellheim. This Prussian Major of 1763, the nobleman and officer, imbued with the highest sense of military honour, but with a sense of honour that does “little for the great ones as a matter of inclination or affection, not much more from a sense of duty, but everything on account of his own honour,” and to whom “the great ones are very superfluous”; this officer who wants and needs “no clemency, only justice,” and, when he obtains justice, declines every favour,—this man is an extraordinary character. He will remain free, for “to be in the service of the great ones is dangerous and not worth the trouble, restraint and degradation it necessitates.” He is far from presuming on the fact of his being an officer, he only “does not regret having become a soldier.” “I became a soldier out of partiality; I do not know myself for what political reasons and out of caprice,

thinking that it is good for every able-bodied man to follow this profession for some time, in order to become acquainted with danger, and to learn to keep cool and resolute. Only the utmost necessity would have forced me to adopt this as a career, and to make a temporary occupation a trade." And to be a soldier only for the sake of fighting, to serve here to-day to-morrow there, seems to him, "to travel like a butcher-boy, nothing more." These principles of Lessing's officer are as revolutionary as those of Schiller's Major in *Kabale und Liebe* who, twenty years later, to the words "The King gave you this sword," replies, "The State gave it to me, through the King."

And how lovingly the accessory characters are treated. This faithful, honest, witty servant, Just; this upright, amiable, noble sergeant,—with what knowledge of the human heart are the not depicted and endowed. Lessing loved the people, whom he knew thoroughly, hence his portrait is as true. And how animated everything is. The lady's maid forming with her sergeant a kind of parallel to Minna and Tellheim; the immortal Riccaut, that model of all swindling *chevaliers d'industrie*. And even the knave of a landlord, the bugbear of honest Just, who, notwithstanding the numerous glasses of Danzig liqueur, still remains a churl; how splendidly is this *Philister* of the day portrayed, with his abject servility for the rich and noble, his meanness towards the deserving in distress, his enthusiasm for the literal omniscience of the King, the authorities, and the Police, on whose back he loads everything, and makes them responsible for it.

The more one ponders over the piece and considers its influences, the more one must admire the admirable precision with which Lessing laid his hand on the only subject of contemporary events, which could ensure for his poetical creation the sympathies of the nation. Goethe, who bewailed his own lot and that of the German poets, because the life of the nation furnished them with nothing, in his old age, regretted "that this extraordinary man (Lessing) lived in such wretched times, which gave him no better materials than those which he worked into his pieces; that he, in his *Minna von Barnhelm*, was obliged to take part in the miserable quarrels of Saxony and Prussia, because he found nothing better." But Goethe shows, at the same time, in what a masterly manner Lessing made use of his materials. "The bitter feeling," says he, "existing between Prussia and Saxony during the war; could not at its conclusion be immediately annulled. The Saxon only now truly began to feel the wounds that the overproud Prussian had inflicted on him. The political treaty of peace could not immediately pacify the temper of the people. Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* was to do this. The beauty and amiability of the Saxon ladies gain the victory over the worthy, honourable, stubborn Prussians, and the leading as well as the subordinate characters are, the conflicting elements notwithstanding, happily united in a dramatically artistic manner." In truth, both people had every reason to be satisfied with the play, and the applause gained in Berlin did not affect its reception in Leipzig. However, Lessing said of himself that, in writing the comedy, he had to be neither Prussian nor Saxon. Besides, he had need to be content with the applause bestowed upon him, both in and outside the theatre, for the financial return which *Minna* brought the author was—nothing.

If Frederick could only have recognized it, no German author was really so akin to his inmost character as Lessing, writes Scherer. Both had the same veracity and ambition, the same youthful thirst for glory, which led them, recklessly, to humiliate their enemies; the same severity towards what was bad; both felt



strongly the need of friendship, while both were but slightly susceptible to the love of woman ; in both enjoyment of life was combined with a strong sense of duty ; both had the same liberal views and tolerance, the same clear, ready and rational style. Lessing demanded of a historian that he should relate contemporary events, a demand that Frederick fulfilled. Lessing introduced strict rule in literature as Frederick did in the field and in home government. Lessing, like the great King, defended the national causes against the foreigner. There never were two men more created for each other than Lessing and Frederick the Great, and Frederick could not have found, anywhere, a subject who would have served him with greater faithfulness and a more worthy aim, or a writer who could have so fully compensated him for the loss of what attracted him in his beloved French. But the unproved and unjust accusation made years before, by a Frenchman whom the King despised much as he admired him, was sufficient reason for striking out the name of this German poet and scholar, for ever, from the list of those who might serve him.

Frederick sits mounted among the tree tops of "*Under den Linden*," and about the pedestal are crowded the life-size figures of the men of his age whom Prussia holds most worthy of remembrance. At the four corners ride the Duke of Brunswick and cunning Prince Heinrich, old Ziethen the Hussar, and Seydlitz, who threw Soubise into rout at Rossbach. Between are a score or more of soldiers of less note,—the Scotchman Keith, who fell in the early morning twilight at Hochkirch, and, more interesting than all, Tauentzien, Lessing's friend,—only soldiers, spurred and girt with sabres, except on the very back of the pedestal, and there, just at the tail of the King's horse, in the most undistinguished place, stand Kant, peer of Plato and Bacon, and, at his side, the noble presence of Lessing. Just standing-room for them among the horses and uniforms, at the tail of Frederick's steed ! The statue of Lessing rises, says Prof. Hosmer, serene, tall, unbending, with gaze fixed as if upon some far-off pleasant prospect—as if he saw the day when in the long education of the human race his time should come. The sculptor builded perhaps wiser than he knew—the back of the King turned so squarely upon the figure of the great writer, the hoofs of the warhorse within easy striking distance. So was he regarded by the great and powerful of the land, of which he was the most illustrious ornament.

Of him, in the words of another poet, it might truly be said that he :

*Von dem grössten deutschen Sohne,  
Von des grossen Friederich's Throne  
Schutzlos ging und ungeehrt.*













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